
Shaking my Practice: Navigating Curriculum, Aesthetic and Social Curiosity

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He aha te mea nui o te ao? He tangata, he tangata, he tangata¹.

What is the most important thing in the world? It is the people, it is the people, it is the people.

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¹ Māori whakatauki, or proverb.

Abstract

This thesis describes a journey, one in which a mid-career teacher interrogates his current teaching pedagogy and practice, his approach to drama and theatre processes and products, and his relationships with his students. It examines teacher and student growth and development, through an application of specific curricula and arts-based research methodologies and reflective practice. It reports changed practice on the part of the teacher and increased student agency and autonomy as they are engaged in workshop and rehearsal.

The research findings in this thesis include an articulation of how a meaningful space can be created – in and through drama workshop and rehearsal – that enables students and teacher to engage in a co-constructed approach to a drama product. The recognition and prioritising of student voice is the foundation to textuality in the spoken parts of the dramatic product, as well as the stimulus for physical action within the performances.

The dramatic product is made up of three rehearsed and performed educational-theatrical projects, co-constructed with students and adult collaborators. The first project takes place within the relatively safe space of the drama studio; however, the second two projects are full-scale dramatic performances, each having a season at the school where the research was undertaken. These second two projects also find meaning through their relationship with a public audience, drawn from the wider school community. All three projects draw upon key factors from *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (MoE, 2000), as well as the core principles of *The New Zealand Curriculum* (MoE, 2007).

The rationale for this work was to enable both teacher and student to engage in a fresh, authentic and innovative workshop and rehearsal paradigm, integrating process and product. The research sought to address a reported experience of teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand, who are oftentimes frustrated in the attempt to reconcile a false dichotomy. This dichotomy is between executing NCEA assessment demands whilst at the same time creating drama products that are socially relevant (fostering biculturalism, multiculturalism and pluralism), and position the student at the heart of the experience and dramatic product.

The locus of the research is in a boys' school on the North Shore of Auckland, an area of relative socio-economic privilege. However, these students though privileged are also culturally undernourished, and lack intellectual and creative tools that allow them to fully engage with the complexity of their context: the bicultural, the multicultural and the pluralistic. Part of the rationale for this work was to culturally enrich students through dramatic play, by introducing them to difference, and to engage them in intellectual, creative and co-constructed dramatic processes and

theatrical performances. This, in turn, would allow them to experience the ‘other’, and gain empathy for a perspective removed from their own.

The methodology is one that combined both elements of arts-based research and reflective practice. The research involves two interconnected layers, one of which was a series of dramatic processes that led to three distinct performance products (the arts-based), and the second being a researcher’s evolving awareness and criticality of his teacher-director practice in a school context (the reflective practice). The participants were high school students, aged between 14 and 18 years-of-age, plus teacher collaborators and external advisors including a Māori cultural advisor in the second project.

Keywords: Aotearoa New Zealand; NCEA; New Zealand Curriculum; arts-based research; reflective practice; drama/theatre education; performance ethnography; verbatim theatre; community theatre; student autonomy, agency and voice; multicultural education; biculturalism; culturally responsive pedagogy

Chapter One: The Theatre Foyer – Introduction

Tūrangawaewae (noun): domicile; standing; place where one has the right to stand; place where one has rights of residence and belonging through kinship and whakapapa.

I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged (Brook, 1968, p. 11).

A female senior school student walks onto a bare stage, hesitantly. She is out of sorts; quietly sad; uncertain of what should happen next. For this drama student, rehearsals have not been going well, so the drama teacher intervenes.

Teacher: “What brings you comfort?”

Student: “Being on stage.”

Teacher: “Good, but can you be more specific?”

Student: “More specific? In what way?”

Teacher: “Well... which stage?”

Student: (*gesturing to the rehearsal venue*) “Well this one.”

Teacher: “Okay, that’s good to know. Is it the entire stage that brings you comfort, or can you be more specific again?”

Student: (*brightening*) “Oh, that’s easy... it’s just here.”

The student walks and gestures to a spot on the stage, down stage right, close to the edge of the stage as it exits to the wings. At that spot there is a distinct indent in the stage, perhaps where a heavy stage weight had been dropped.

Student: “This spot is where I feel most comfortable, the happiest. Just here.”

As she speaks her face lights up as she begins to relive the experience.

Student: “It was here in Year 8... I was standing right here in Year 8 when I got my first laugh... I can still remember the feeling, the emotion... It was wonderful.”

Teacher: “So this spot has a profound meaning to you personally, psychologically, emotionally?”

The student nods.

Teacher: “It helps, in however a small way, to define you as a performer?”

Student (*interrupting*) “As a person, actually. The experience, its meaning is that important to me.”

Teacher: (*absentmindedly*) “Tūrangawaewae”

Student: “I’m sorry?”

Teacher: “Tūrangawaewae. It’s a notion in te ao Māori, and it describes a place that brings meaning to you, which helps to define you as a person. It could be where you were born, or maybe your home, perhaps the location of your iwi. But for you, as a non-Māori, it would be quite acceptable to describe this spot, stage right, where we find the damaged stage (and where you got that first laugh). This could be your tūrangawaewae, because this is where you found and explored a developing sense of yourself as a performer, and as you have said as a young adult.”

The student smiles, the ennui and uncertainty seen at the start of the rehearsal begin to diminish, as confidence returns.

Although it was a brief and modest interchange between myself and a student, it was a seminal one for both. For me, it was a realisation that te ao Māori² and Tikanga³ could have a profound and penetrating value for young, intelligent – but culturally malnourished – Pākehā- and Asian-New Zealand students. For the female student it was a realisation that a spiritual notion from an alien culture could bring comfort and clarity during a challenging period.

Seven years on I realise that it was this interchange that set me on the path towards a new focus as a teacher-practitioner, which in turn would lead me to this PhD.

² The Maori World.

³ Customary Practice.

1.1 A start point

This thesis describes a journey, one in which a mid-career teacher interrogates his current teaching pedagogy and practice, his approach to drama and theatre processes and products, and his relationships with his students. It begins with a certain degree of uncertainty and stasis, on the part of the teacher, as he considers how and where he is situated, at the mid-point of his career.

The teacher recognises that his training, experience and approach are now no longer quite fit-for-purpose, and that for a more productive future teaching and theatre-making life, change is necessary. This thesis outlines the thinking that precipitated that change and the processes that were undertaken to achieve the change, as well as the products that eventuated.

The narrative of this journey includes an articulation, analysis and reflection of the processes and products, across three chapters, as well as aesthetic analysis, an investigation of biculturalism, multiculturalism and pluralism through and in performance, and the consideration of the testimonies of participants – students, artists and teacher-collaborators – and a collection of images that help communicate that narrative.

The creative-aesthetic-pedagogical-collaborative work that is described in this thesis takes place at a positive moment in time for drama in New Zealand, when drama as a curriculum subject finds itself at the heart of *The New Zealand Curriculum* (MoE, 2007), having moved “from the margins to the centre” (O’Connor, 2012). Drama, in Aotearoa New Zealand, is reflected and embodied in its own, dedicated *Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (MoE, 2000), and is strongly implicit in the current national curriculum documents. It is also embraced and celebrated by many schools in Aotearoa New Zealand, as part of a ‘four cornerstones’ education: academics, sports, leadership and culture. Positively compounding the status of drama, is the fact the work in this thesis was undertaken in a school that has a positive attitude towards culture and the arts, seeing it as an equal to all other activities a student might become engaged with at the school. However, the creative work undertaken with students on a major school production can often be limited by a school’s desire for a product with name recognition and a desire for mass involvement. Such an approach can limit student agency and autonomy and mitigate against the making of quality aesthetic-cultural-performative products that reflect the nature of their communities. This thesis examines potential alternatives, the tensions that led to their inception, the creative processes that helped raise them, and the impact on that community.

1.2 The focus and purpose of this study

The focus of this study is reflective practice (Schön, 1983; Geertz, 1973; Taylor, 2000), in which the author considers his current practice and imagines what an improved future practice could look and feel like, for both himself and his participants. Its purpose is to help empower both teacher/s and collaborating students to find ways to develop new pedagogical and creative-aesthetic practices that will allow both to co-envision, co-construct and enable relevant, contemporary dramatic-theatrical products, whilst providing those collaborators opportunity to experience agency and autonomy. The research and creative work in this thesis was undertaken in the hope that it will eventuate in a positive response to the experience of stasis in my role, as the teacher-practitioner, for new departures in both processes and product for my students, the provocation and enrichment of audiences who see the final dramatic products, and the nurturing of a community sensibility for those who see or who become engaged in the projects.

1.3 The research question

The research question, guiding both this research and thesis, is

How can a drama teacher develop new dramatic-performative work that engages teacher, student and community with the aesthetic, develops social curiosity, at the same time that it meets curriculum goals?

The sub-questions, that emanate from the primary research question, include:

- What processes needed to be undertaken in order to create new dramatic-theatrical-performative work?
- How do the dramatic-theatrical products reflect the successful application of such processes?
- How does the teacher come to understand the aesthetic in terms of text and drama and theatre?
- How can a teacher communicate what it is to manipulate the aesthetic to his students?
- How does a teacher provide students the opportunity to experience their own agency and autonomy, allowing them also to successfully manipulate the aesthetic?

These questions are deconstructed and approached in the chapters that follow, specifically the three on Projects #1, #2 and #3:

- Project #1: In a Black Box Studio, Playing with Ideas. This first project looks at biculturalism and multiculturalism, utilising Bruce Mason's seminal New Zealand playtext,

The Pohutukawa Tree, as its foundation. It is class-based, working with Year 11 students⁴, and modest in its community outreach.

- Project #2: On a Thrust Stage, Trying to Break into a Bicultural Space. This project unpacks a practical exploration of a performative bicultural identity, for both Pākehā and Māori alike, utilising Shakespeare's play, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The performative research is publicly performed during a week-long season, involving students male and female (and non-binary) from both the Boys' and the Girls' High Schools.
- Project #3: The Traverse and the Dialogic. The final project is an examination of multiculturalism, pluralism and post-modernism, as experienced by the student-participants, through the creation of a piece of drama and theatre, which stems from work in verbatim drama and performance ethnography, resulting in the play, *YouthQuake*. The performative research is publicly performed during a week-long season, and each performance ends with an audience-cast debate (the dialogic), during which responses to the work are discussed and argued over. The project involved students both male and female (and non-binary) from both the Boys' and the Girls' High Schools.

1.4 The overall research design and structure of the thesis

The thesis follows three projects (#1, # 2 and #3), each designed to address specific portions of the research question.

The word 'theatre' is primarily a noun, but it also suggests associated verbs. This is because theatre also indicates performative acts, which by their nature are an action, an act, or activity. In recognition of this duality, I have decided to structure the chapters of this thesis using the vernacular of drama and theatre, founding the thesis on relevant terms used in the processes and products created by myself and the participants. Firstly, comes the Theatre Foyer, where expectant audiences gather before the performance; this chapter serves as an Introduction. After this comes the Neighbourhood; this chapter serves as the Context. The Technical Box is the title I have given the chapter that outlines my Methodology, and the Green Room the title given for the Literature Review. These chapters are followed by three more on the three creative-aesthetic-performative-educational acts of process resulting in a dramatic product:

- In a Black Box Studio, Playing with Ideas and *The Pohutukawa Tree*;
- On a Thrust Stage, Trying to Break into a Bicultural Space and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*;

⁴ A Year 11 student is typically 15-16 years of age.

- The Traverse and the Dialogic and *YouthQuake*.

The thesis is completed with a discussion In the Theatre Bar, which is where I draw threads together to frame a Conclusion.

1.5 The importance of the research

Drama classrooms and major school productions in Aotearoa New Zealand are still too often filled with ‘well-made’ plays, and musicals, with name recognition, when it is possible to create meaningful work that is also fresh, vital and new, providing the participants and audiences with agency and autonomy, as well as a chance to experience the bicultural, multicultural and pluralist perspectives of Aotearoa New Zealand. Liberating teacher and students from the “tyranny of well-known scripts” (Fels, 2012), and providing teacher-practitioners with a template of how a production *might* be approached is a noble goal. This is especially relevant in these drama advisory-light times, as new Ministry of Education priorities mean that the NZQA arts specialists – who were made available after the release of *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (2000), and remained to help teachers execute *The New Zealand Curriculum* (2007) – are becoming rarer. Compounding this is a diminishing of face-to-face hours with specialist lecturers in Graduate Diploma programmes in secondary drama education, and the ministry’s decision to only hold Drama Best Practice workshops in regions which have the teacher attendance numbers to justify the cost of a workshop.

Chapter Two: The Neighbourhood – Context

“Kai Moana”

The staffroom was seemingly empty. A golden-reddish, early morning light played through the windows, casting a dappled effect upon the seats and tables within. A fitful night's sleep, ahead of a first day at a brand-new school (and in a new country), had resulted in an early rise and a premature arrival at my new school. As I stood in the doorway of that same staffroom, surveying the scene, I heard gentle laughter and ribbing from somewhere within. Looking inwards I saw three staff members at the farthest table, and as I began to walk down the corridor between tables and chairs (towards where the staff pigeonholes were) a voice called out:

“Kia ora! Morena, Matua Nick! Kei te pēhea koe?”

“Ah, ki-, err ki-, err... hello?” I spluttered out, nervously, unable to offer a greeting in te reo Māori.

“E noho, boy”, said another voice, warmly, as I got close.

“Is here OK?”, I asked, falteringly, gesturing to an empty seat.

“Ae, Matua”, said the first voice. “E noho.” And so, I sat.

“Have you had any kai this morning, Matua?” asked the third member of the table.

“Err, yes, a little... But I never turn down a free meal”, I said, picking up on the jocular mood.

“That’ll make you a Māori then”, said the first, as the table erupted into good-humoured laughter.

The table burst into conversation, good natured, warm, filled with epithets and references to people and places I knew nothing of, but was keen to learn.

“Now Matua – this is what we call ‘kai moana’, from where we come from”, said the first.

I quickly learned this was Whaea Bloss, and she was a member of the Māori department. The second, Matua Taua Kemp, was the head of the department, and the last member of this generous, humorous and animated bunch was another teacher, Rachel, and facilitator of the Russell Bishop designed Te Kotahitanga project. As they chatted, I dived in to the food with gusto, devouring a selection of various seafood delicacies, some of which – mussels – I recognised, and some of which – Kina – I did not.

“So, kai moana, is...” offered Whaea Bloss.

“Fruits of the sea” interjected Matua Taua.

“I love seafood”, I said, “and this is delicious! You must have got up early to get to New World⁵ to buy this before school started.”

“You egg”, said Matua Taua playfully, and as the others laughed.

“All the kai on this table we fetched up from our nets at the bottom of the marae at Te Tii, about an hour ago”, interjected Whaea Bloss.

“You have eaten seafood from Aotearoa before, yes?” Rachel spoke nervously.

In truth, I had not eaten any seafood in New Zealand, and certainly none that had been fished out of the sea less than an hour previous.

“Oh, yes, of course...” I lied, so that I did not offend my hosts.

“Ae, tino pai... That is a relief to hear,” said Whaea Bloss.

The conversation continued as we ate, sometimes in te reo Māori, sometimes in English; oftentimes gliding between the two languages is if they had both been intimate collaborators for many years, with neither language vying for pre-eminence.

Over many years, I have often returned and dwelled on this exchange – my first experience of biculturalism – in my imagination. Replaying it in my head, interrogating it for its relevance and authenticity, and I now recognise that what I experienced was, in microcosm, a modest demonstration of a bicultural possibility. I experienced two cultures in harmony, sharing what nature and mahi⁶ made available, blending language and cultural touchstones easily, and non-hierarchically. I experienced two peoples joined in what James Ritchie (1992) described as a functioning bicultural society in Aotearoa New Zealand, making “real the ideals we have of a bicultural destiny” (p. 8).

⁵ The local supermarket.

⁶ Mahi is to “work” or “perform” or to “accomplish” in te reo Māori.

2.1 Tūrangawaewae⁷

But I am saying that we will not easily achieve an authentic bicultural society unless everyone who wants to be involved does go through their own personal process of growth in understanding, and finds their own personal Credo too (Ritchie, 1992, p.10).

I am not to the manor/manner born. I am a legal resident in a sometimes-confusing context. I am a first-generation migrant. My children are native-born New Zealanders. I am, however, *happily* dislocated. I embrace the space to explore and play in the possibilities inherent in reimagining my positionality.

My current position as a teacher and director in Aotearoa New Zealand is predicated upon several factors. Firstly, I was born in London, not Aotearoa. Secondly, I did not initially train as a teacher, but as a theatre director and then as an actor. My undergraduate degree saw me developing as a young director by focusing on the direction of plays by Harold Pinter, and then writing a summation of my experience in a thesis, which looked at the notion of masculinity and threat in his plays. After university I attended drama school and focused purely on the role of the actor and the actor's craft, and then worked in theatre in London and regional theatre in the UK. I then undertook a master's degree and returned to directing theatre, with my work taking me to London, Rome, Bermuda and New York. As I directed, I also found myself being asked to teach in drama schools and universities, but with no formal teaching foundation I decided to train as a teacher. Now, as a mid-career teacher, I find myself reflecting on my current pedagogy: how I am currently located pedagogically; why and how my pedagogy has been formed; its genesis over time; what my teacher/teaching values and principles are; and where these skills, this training, these experiences might lead after this moment. To aid me, I have undertaken a PhD to help formalise my thinking.

I find myself designing and then writing the first full draft of this thesis at the beginning of a New Year, a moment traditionally seen as a time for renewal, for change, for self-improvement. Many start a diet or sign up to a gym; but these lesser events disguise the fact the we, as humans, are regularly reimagining our positionality and locatedness in terms of our new-found relationships to things, places and people. We may, at some point in our lives, find ourselves in a new relationship, in a new job, or even a new country; each departure allows us to explore a modicum of personal reinvention. The drama space, both curriculum and extra-/co-curricular is a rich and raw space in which to explore this personal reinvention. Alexander (2005) observed that personal reinvention through the dramatic play-process of performance ethnography is possible, wherein performance

⁷ (Noun) domicile, standing, place where one has the right to stand – place where one has rights of residence and belonging through kinship and whakapapa.

participants can experience a potential sense of the "other". Othering is made possible by an awareness of not only the changing self but also others in or just beyond the individual's frame of existence:

In a literal sense of the aphorism "walking a mile in someone else's shoes," performance ethnography most often entails an embodied experience of the cultural practices of the other. This practice has the intent of allowing the participants in and audience of the performance the opportunity to come to know the culture differently (Alexander, 2005, p. 413).

A period of sustained negotiation with identity and positionality comes during our teenage years as young adults come to terms with the rapidly changing circumstances they find themselves in. Dramatic play can be a way of exploring that negotiation, as often "Either permanently... or temporarily... performers – and sometimes spectators too – are changed by the activity of performing" (Schechner, 1985, p. 4). Dramatic play and performance allows "many opportunities to read about the possibility for individual and social transformation" (Cahnmann-Taylor & Souto-Manning, 2010, p. 5), and if the dramatic work is rich and robust enough it can bring "about change in a participant's understanding of the world" (Bolton, 1984, p. 148).

At the same time as contending with a developing sense of themselves as a young adult, each student is also navigating their sense of *cultural* locatedness. 50% of our school population was born overseas, yet they now recognise themselves as Kiwi. What is also clear through discussion with my students is that most of them are materially well-off, but culturally under-nourished. By this I mean that students tend to exist in a niche culture(s) in school that they easily, conveniently align with: a sports team, first-language speakers, bands or orchestral groups, and the like. Even within these groups, however, students tend to find like-minded friends who can sometimes reinforce a worldview, limiting their experience of the "other".

Students' changes in physical appearance and voice, the changes in social position and groups, their growing knowledge of cultural groupings and of social and national/international politics – much occurs in a brief period to provoke questions of belonging and how one is situated as a young adult. As a teacher, and especially as an arts educator – where there is an ambition to position the student at the heart of the enquiry – I have an obligation to mitigate the tension and trauma of this period in a student's life through efficacious in-class educational experiences. When considering my own position and locatedness, I am also able to humbly share my own shifting, changing relationship to place and self, and model a relationship to these changes. Thus, teacher and students can develop empathy towards one-another as we share the risk-taking inherent in a unit of dramatic work that

aims to explore shifting identities that we as individuals are navigating, as we search for a sense of self, and an understanding of place, that is deep-rooted, meaningful, consistent, embedded; a concept in te ao Māori known as Tūrangawaewae.

2.2 The New Zealand Curriculum, 2007: the ‘front end’

The latest iteration of *The New Zealand Curriculum*⁸ (NZC) was published by the New Zealand Ministry of Education (MoE) in 2007, replacing the previous national curriculum documents, which began to be implemented from 1992. One of its more notable attributes are the Vision, Principles, Values, and Key Competencies section within the NZC, which can be found at what has become colloquially known as the ‘front end’ of the curriculum document. By this, educators mean the first few pages of the document, in which the Vision, Principles, Values, and Key Competencies are fully articulated and explained. These four areas of the NZC greatly influence how I – generally – position myself as a teacher (of all students), and how I – specifically – wanted to approach the teaching and learning experience for the students, in the shaping of each of my three projects (Project #1, Chapter 5, p. 72; Project #2, Chapter 6, p. 119; Project #3, Chapter 7, p. 173). From the Vision section (MoE, 2007, p. 8), I drew upon the concepts that students will be encouraged to be:

- Confident: Positive in their own identity
- Connected: Connected to the land and environment
- Lifelong learners: Critical and creative thinkers

In the workshopping, devising, and/or writing, rehearsal and performance work for each project, these three NZC concepts were seen in the way that students engaged with both social and cultural negotiation, enabling the execution of an efficacious dramatic product. A drama workshop or rehearsal room is an inherently social context (O’Toole, 1992; Neelands, 2010), and work is negotiated between participants very much in the present moment. Rarely do students leave a workshop or rehearsal and then re-enter with a solution or new fix for a unit of performance work. Learning to negotiate the personalities of the group, knowing when to push an idea or perspective, and knowing when to stay quiet are key to successful dramatic teamwork. The students also observed, modelled by their teacher and fellow student actor/devisors, a manner of engaging with a problem that is inquiry focused. An inquiry approach is a way of building student facility towards a sense of life-long learning. Students are encouraged to embrace an openness, to be free and adaptable in their learning, recognising that as their world changes so will the manner that they engage with knowledge and the creation of ideas.

⁸ <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/The-New-Zealand-Curriculum>

In regards of both Project #1 and #2, in which performative notions of biculturalism are explored, students see modelled (and are encouraged to model) a fundamental connection to each other, through a dramatic-play process, to an alien culture, to te ao Māori, Maoritanga, te reo Māori, as well as to parallel notions in other non-indigenous cultures to New Zealand. This builds empathy, and facility in navigating a rapidly challenging, multicultural, pluralist, 21st Century globalised world.

In each project, I drew upon the Principles section⁹ of *The New Zealand Curriculum* (NZC) framework (MoE, 2007, p. 9). The Principles are the “Foundations of curriculum decision making” and “embody beliefs about what is important and desirable in school curriculum – nationally and locally.” These principles “should underpin all school decision making” and “put students at the centre of teaching and learning” (MoE, 2007, p. 9). Principles I decided to explicitly utilise from the NZC included:

- Treaty of Waitangi / Te Tiriti o Waitangi
- Cultural diversity: values the histories and traditions of all its people
- Inclusion: non-racist, and non-discriminatory
- Community engagement: engages the support of whānau
- Future focus: exploring citizenship

Aotearoa New Zealand is a bicultural nation, and the founding document underpinning this is Te Tiriti o Waitangi (a transliteration of The Treaty of Waitangi, in te reo Māori). The Treaty is the predicate from which roles and responsibilities are defined, enabling an articulation of how the Crown is obligated towards Māori. A recognition of land ownership and rights for Māori, a recognition of Māori self-determination, and a recognition of cultural practice are asserted in the treaty. An understanding of this document and its contemporary implications comes about through work on Project #1: *The Pohutukawa Tree*, and Project #2: *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. The Treaty, and class/rehearsal conversations that spring from it, also allows teachers and students alike to model a positive relationship between a seemingly dominant culture and one seeking parity – te ao Pākehā and te ao Māori. This has implications for all students in a class or rehearsal, to recognise that their unique cultural background can be part of the discussion, that their cultural background is recognised and has value in this process. This realisation for students, and allowing space for such conversations, reflects that 50% of our school population were born overseas. What unites us is that we have all decided to exist here, in Aotearoa New Zealand.

⁹ The NZ Curriculum Framework identifies several principles that underline the curriculum in its entirety.

Next, I drew upon what the NZC calls Values, which are expected to “be encouraged, modelled and explored” within a New Zealand classroom. The NZC defines values as “deeply held beliefs about what is important or desirable” and these are “expressed through the ways in which people think and act” (MoE, 2007, p. 10). Three values I especially focused on were:

- Innovation, inquiry, and curiosity
- Diversity
- Equity

To use a process of “deconstruction” (Schechner, 1985) as a dramatic-theatrical approach, as opposed to linear, logical and normative rendering of a performance text/s, is – I would argue – both atypical and non-normative in a New Zealand school context. In undertaking such an approach, student-actors are enabled, given agency to create and build their roles in accordance with their cultural values and understanding. Furthermore, this approach allows for an equitable allocation of roles and opportunity for students, modelling how we should conduct ourselves in the world beyond the rehearsal room.

Finally, in my projects’ design, I also utilised the Key Competencies, which are “Capabilities for living and lifelong learning” (MoE, 2007, p. 12). Students are encouraged to “use these competencies to live, learn, work, and contribute as active members of their communities.” The Key Competencies “are the key to learning in every learning area” (MoE, 2007, p. 12). Three Key Competencies that became a primary focus include:

- Using language, symbols, and texts
- Relating to others
- Participating and contributing

An example of how the Key Competencies were used, both in general and in the specific, can be found in work in Project #1: *The Pohutukawa Tree*. The central symbol at the heart of the playtext of *The Pohutukawa Tree* is the tree itself. Its symbolic power, communicating precepts such as Kaitiakitanga¹⁰ and its relationship to Tikanga¹¹, is potent (Key Competency: The Treaty of Waitangi, Cultural Diversity and Equity). It is unsurprising that the published playtext uses the tree as its single image on the cover. In turn, its presence in newly written scenes and in conversations with students about whenua¹² (Relating to Others) is crucial in a developing student understanding of biculturalism (Inclusion and Future Focus). Further to this, whaikorero (the formal speaking of te

¹⁰ (Noun) guardianship, stewardship, trusteeship, trustee.

¹¹ (Noun) correct procedure, custom, habit, lore, method, manner, rule, way, code, meaning, plan, practice, convention, protocol – the customary system of values and practices that have developed over time and are deeply embedded in the social context.

¹² (Noun) country, land, ground, placenta, afterbirth.

reo Māori on the Marae) is rich in its use of metaphors, allusions and symbols, and is also found in the playtext, far more than in everyday speech. Further examples abound in the other two projects and are articulated and can be read in the relevant chapters later in this thesis.

Finally, it is important that, during this project, students – with their myriad origin stories – learn to work productively and positively with others, regardless of cultural, national and language differences, especially in these times when globalisation and pluralism are under attack by the reemergent far-right political forces in the United States, Europe and around the world. To participate in this dramatic-theatrical process is a democratic, political act in the face of such an attack.

2.3 Achievement Standards

The Achievement Standards (AS) are the NZQA/NCEA assessment tool used to measure the efficacy of a unit of dramatic work. “Each standard describes what a student needs to know, or what they must be able to achieve, in order to meet the standard. Having met it, they will gain credits towards national qualifications.” To see if the student has met the standard, students sit assessments. The “Assessments measure what a student knows or can do against the registered criteria of a standard in courses they study. If they meet the criteria, they achieve the standard, and gain credits towards a qualification.”¹³ For each Achievement Standard there are four possible grades:

- Achieved (A) for a satisfactory performance
- Merit (M) for very good performance
- Excellence (E) for outstanding performance
- Not achieved (N) if students do not meet the criteria of the standard

Each student is always assessed individually whether he (or she) works alone or as part of an ensemble. The AS are divided into five distinct areas of dramatic practice: Drama Creation; Drama Performance; Drama Studies; Entertainment and Event Technology; and Performing Arts Technology.

AS were only formally used for the first project (#1) in this thesis, *The Pohutukawa Tree*, as this was an in-class process, which was designed to allow students to achieve five credits through a formal assessment moment at the end of the process. In this work, I drew upon drama Achievement Standards from Drama Performance. The Achievement Standard utilised was number AS90009, Version 6. The subject reference is Drama 1.6, and its title is Perform an acting role in a scripted production. The Achievement Standard is an internal standard, meaning that teachers within the

¹³ <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/ncea/understanding-ncea/how-ncea-works/standards/>

institution (school) assess it, commonly as a team¹⁴. The AS is worth five credits. However, the approach outlined in this research could also have been executed using alternative Achievement Standards, and at other Levels (1-3) of the curriculum¹⁵. This unit of work also draws upon materials from both the Teaching and Learning Guide for Drama (MOE, 2010), and the Arts Curriculum (MOE, 2000).

The unit of work around *The Pohutukawa Tree* (Project #1) occurs in Term 2 of the school year, is designed for Year 11 students, and is set between two contrasting (yet complementary) units of work: a dramatic-theatrical study of Commedia dell 'Arte (Term 1; theatre form) and creating devised work around narratives from Hiroshima and the use of the first atomic bomb (Term 3; devising). All three units allow for skill acquisition and social development, whilst also inquiring about the real world. Term 4 is dedicated to examination preparation. The units of work in Year 11 fit into a holistic school curriculum across five years, which can be seen in Figure 1 – the Drama & Theatre Arts Curriculum Matrix, Year 9 to Year 13. Prior to senior school drama and theatre arts, Year 9 and 10 students experience opportunities that allow them to both develop social and emotional literacy awareness and skill, and also to establish a basic foundation in drama techniques (voice, body, movement and use of space). From Year 11, students build upon this foundation, and start to navigate their developing, and ever-more complex, creative selves as actors, researchers, writers, devisors and directors. This can be seen in the complexity of the units of drama work in the following table, Figure 1.

Finally, NCEA – as a qualifications structure – allows for a great deal of flexibility on the part of the school and the teacher, when designing a school-specific curriculum. This can be seen in both the creation of units of teaching and learning and in their execution. Although New Zealand-designed, NCEA allows a space for teachers that enables curricula to be designed that are relevant, both locally and globally. For example, units of teaching and learning can be created in my school that reflect and support the demography and unique cultural identity and practice of my school and its students. Similarly, teacher-practitioner colleagues in South Auckland tell me that they are equally capable of utilising NCEA to create targeted, meaningful and rewarding curricula for their school's unique cultural identity and their student community, which is far different to mine.

¹⁴ The AS are in no way a de facto curriculum; however, it can be tempting for teachers new to drama to treat them as such.

¹⁵ <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/qualifications-standards/qualifications/ncea/subjects/drama/levels/>

Drama & Theatre Arts Matrix	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4	Miscellany	Extension Enrichment
Year 9	"Theatresports"; "Drama Techniques"; "Mask Work"; "Building a Character"; "Status Play"; "Open Scripts".		Term and Semester course Semester also has a modest differentiated Performance Unit (RSM): e.g. Jabberwocky; Seuss, open Script		The Year 9 course can be taught in any order New units can be included from 2018 2018=RSM leading the Year 9/10 programme	Theatresports Production Performing Arts Technology Team (PATT) – US credits in Sound, Lighting & Production Management
Year 10	"Introduction to Drama & Theatre" unit	"Open Scripts" unit	"Physical Theatre & Shakespeare" unit & "New Script" unit	AS1.1 Techniques & "Stage Fighting" unit (non-assessed)	4 Credits	Theatresports Production PATT
Year 11	AS1.4 Form & Period: "Commedia dell 'Arte"	AS1.6 Acting Role: <i>The Pohutukawa Tree</i>	AS1.2 Devising: "Hiroshima Project"	AS1.3/1.7 Exam Prep	22 Credits	Theatresports Production PATT
Year 12	AS2.4 Form & Period: "Shakespeare's Theatre" or "Voices of NZ and the Pacific"	AS2.1 & AS2.8 (& AS2.5 English) Forum Theatre: "Humans of New York"	AS2.2 Devising: "Political Theatre & Brecht"	AS2.3/2.7 Exam Prep	25 Credits Pathway option	Theatresports Production SGCNZ Comp. PATT
Year 13	AS3.6 Acting Role: "Play Production" <i>Bare, Niu Sila, Blood Wedding, Sganarelle</i>	AS3.4 Form & Period: Physical Theatre & "4.48 Psychosis"	AS3.2 Devising: "The Last Five Years"	AS3.3/3.7 Exam Prep Scholarship Drama	22 Credits AS3.6 a collaboration w/ Spanish	Theatresports Production PATT
PATT	PATT US will be taught across the year (after school) by LMC. A proposal to have a full year, timetables curriculum course was lodged in May 2018 and approved in July.					

Figure 1. *The Drama & Theatre Arts Curriculum Matrix*

2.4 Rich contexts and the curriculum

All of the work undertaken in this thesis, and the research-teaching project, falls into an ambition amongst some New Zealand drama teachers, in which “rich contexts” (Davidson, 2012) are created and investigated, and where thorough, penetrating inquiry is used as a tool to allow students to engage with the world around them. Furthermore, drama and theatre allows students to generate both an understanding of and an ability to embody moments of autonomy and agency, both of which are generated by rich contexts and inquiry.

To me it is axiomatic that the in-school study of drama and theatre is not solely focused on the building of skills to become an accomplished actor (O’Toole, 1992). Preferably, it is on the one hand predicated upon the desire to create socially and emotionally adept young adults; on the other, young adults who can come to understand how their complex world(s) functions (Neelands, 2010). It is in the latter area that I mostly focused my ambition and efforts. That is not to deny the clear opportunity that students had to acquire skills in emotional and social literacy, as well as play in the arena of performance, which ultimately led them to develop a character (role) in a play (original or devised/newly written) and within this role execute their developing acting skills.

2.5 Setting the scene

I choose to work in a school, but I have worked in professional theatre, as well as in drama schools.

A theatre company serves artistically, aesthetically the community within which it sits – it creates, and shares work that challenges, provokes thought, allows for escape. A drama school serves the student actors training to reach the standards that allow them to work in the profession – it coaches, it provides a regimen or craft, it shares a vision for an industry standard. A school works to allow students access to arts education – as part of a balanced curriculum ‘diet’, as a means of self-exploration, as a vehicle for inquiry.

The school in which I teach is a decile 9 boys’ school on the North Shore of Auckland City, in Aotearoa New Zealand. For those from outside Aotearoa New Zealand, and who may not know about our decile system, it is defined by the Ministry of Education (MoE) in the following way:

School deciles indicate the extent the school draws their students from low socio-economic communities. We use deciles to target funding, for state and state-

integrated schools, to help them overcome any barriers to learning that students from lower socio-economic communities might face. The lower the school's decile, the more funding it receives.¹⁶

My school is in an area of economic wealth and thus receives a higher decile number (9) but lesser funding than say a school located in a community of lower socio-economic advantage. It is important to note that “A school's decile does not indicate the overall socio-economic mix of the school or reflect the quality of education the school provides” (MoE).

Secondly, although creative and aesthetically ambitious work was explored in the works cited in this thesis, working in a school context is quite different from previous work I have undertaken in drama schools, and professional and community theatre groups. A school's functions are predicated upon many factors, but two key aspects are *The New Zealand Curriculum* (NZC) and a school's strategic plan. These two documents frame the way teaching and learning (T&L) are developed and executed by teaching staff working in their area of the school. Because my creative work was undertaken in a school, as opposed to a specialist context like a drama school, there are also many competing forces for students and staff to be cognisant of, as they attempt to fulfil myriad expectations and purposes.

Furthermore, because my work with students takes place within a school, the drama and theatre work is ‘applied’ rather than ‘pure’, which is an important distinction. Aesthetic exploration and creation is undertaken, but is always done so in conjunction with a focus on positive educational outcomes for all participants. In the foundation and execution of my research and practical work, I recognise Boal's philosophical admonishment that “Theatre is a form of knowledge; it should and can also be a means of transforming society. Theatre can help us build our future, rather than just wait for it” (Boal, 1992).

Because I work within a school, this also provides many structural and institutional challenges, which must be mediated by staff and students alike: physically limited rehearsal space, specific school hours, and time where students are on examination leave. The unique

¹⁶ <https://www.education.govt.nz/school/running-a-school/resourcing/operational-funding/school-decile-ratings/>

limiting structure of a school context can thwart the type of creative endeavour one hopes to undertake with students.

In 2018, the demography of the school was made up in the following way: out of a school roll of 2,345 students, 1,068 or 46% were Pākehā¹⁷; 756 or 32% were Asian New Zealanders; 161 7% were Māori; 96 or 4% were Pasifika; 69 or 3% were ‘Other’¹⁸; and, 195 or 8% were international students.

The North Shore has long been a commuter belt for affluent Aucklanders, from where they would commute to work in the city. Until around 25 years ago, it was a predominantly Pākehā area, but this has changed rapidly. The demography of the North Shore, and thus my school, has changed with an increase in both Korean and Chinese migrants settling and working in Auckland.

2.8 My entry; my position

The space in which I teach is a multicultural space; however, it is one that is dedicated to protecting and promoting the voice and culture of tangata whenua¹⁹. This is mandated in the school’s Strategic Plan, and article #2 which recognises the expectation of all staff to “promote biculturalism within a multicultural context.”²⁰ I am also an embodiment of multiculturalism, a fact that I am keen to model with, and promote to, my students in a celebratory manner. My mother was born in India to a British father and Indo-British mother, and then raised in New Zealand; my father was born in London of Irish immigrant parents; my wife’s grandfather was from Malaysia; my children are born in Aotearoa New Zealand to first generation migrants from the UK. Such ‘background noise’ has huge implications for how I position myself in the class, and the values and principles of social justice, multiculturalism and pluralism that I am keen to share and explore with them.

2.9 The opportunities and challenges of teaching in this space

My opportunities to teach within this unique teaching space are both rich and exciting; however, there are – as with all schools – also challenges to contend with. My class work is focused on working with young men; my extracurricular work with young men and women, as well as students navigating their sexual identity. Alone together in class, as a group of

¹⁷ (Noun) New Zealander of European descent.

¹⁸ ‘Other’ includes Middle Eastern, Latin American, and African.

¹⁹ (Noun) local people, hosts, indigenous people – people born of the whenua, i.e. of the placenta and of the land where the people’s ancestors have lived and where their placenta are buried.

²⁰ School strategic plan, 2018.

young men, my students are open, playful, and happy to explore the sensitive and feminine sides of themselves. However, when young women enter their context, as in a rehearsal setting, some young men can become territorial and revert to a masculine archetype. These tensions have been well researched (Ackroyd & O'Toole, 2010; Belliveau, 2015; Hatton & Sallis, 2019) but they do not mitigate against dynamic opportunities for productive learning and creative processes and products; in fact, I embrace the challenges.

My research and my writing have been partially provoked by experiences I have had teaching at previous schools. These schools privileged the perceived identity of its school character over the needs of, and obligation towards, its students. In these contexts, autonomy, agency and student voice were quieted, which in retrospect was troubling. I now experience a context that is open and democratic as opposed to closed and autocratic. Therefore, the challenge is welcomed as it is indicative of opportunity for teacher and student.

Beyond the walls of my teaching space, and assisting the opportunity and challenge, are the teacher support networks. These provide intellectual, creative and practical support to the drama teacher. Drama New Zealand²¹ is the subject association for teachers of drama in Aotearoa New Zealand, and each year they hold a three-day conference. During such conferences workshops can be undertaken, plenary panels can be attended, and networking opportunities can be had. Further to this, the Ministry of Education (MoE) also funds Dramanet²², which is an online community of around 700 teachers of drama, from primary to tertiary. Here questions can be asked, and resources can be found by those in need. Farther afield, IDIERI²³ is a triennial, international conference for teacher-practitioners of the arts, which in 2018 was held in Auckland, New Zealand, and where I presented some of my research in a 30-minute lecture.

2.10 The context of the three processes and productions

The varying contexts for the three projects, #1, #2 and #3, are quite different to each other, however, they do enjoy a connective thread, which is outlined in each chapter (5-7). Each was undertaken on the school campus, using its facilities and resources and personnel:

²¹ <https://www.drama.org.nz/>

²² <https://artsonline.tki.org.nz/Communities/Drama-Dramanet>

²³ <https://www.idieri2018.org/>

- Project #1 (Chapter 5), *The Pohutukawa Tree*, is bounded by the classroom it occurs in, its work with only male students in the class, an inward-facing lens, and its restricted audience of fellow students and drama staff.
- Project #2 (Chapter 6), *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, is bounded by a public theatre space (in thrust configuration), is work with male, female and non-binary students, has an outward facing lens, a bicultural focus, and has no restriction on audience, as all are welcome from the school and wider community.
- Project #3 (Chapter 7), *YouthQuake*, is bounded by the same public theatre (in traverse configuration), is work with male, female and non-binary students, has an outward facing lens (including direct audience participation), a bicultural, multicultural and pluralist focus, and has no restriction on audience, as all are welcome from the school and wider community.

Chapter Three: The Green Room – conversations with present/distant actors: a review of selected literature and development of a conceptual framework

What follows is an examination of literature, relevant to this study, both from Aotearoa New Zealand and from around the world.

If you will indulge me, I imagine myself in a metaphorical green room, of an imagined theatre. Traditionally the green room is the mostly quiet, sometimes raucous, space for actors to rest in, either before entering or after exiting the stage. It is also sometimes used for cast and production parties, and celebrations. In this particular green room at this time are a strategic number of actors and theatre workers, gathered for this specific production. They are not all the actors and theatre workers that have ever existed but have been ‘cast’ for their suitability to the role that they will perform in this unique production. I find myself amongst them, an intern at the theatre, chatting and listening to their voices, the stories of their experience, the lessons learned through the experimentation and practice of their craft. They provide nourishment and inspiration to my own thinking, as it strives to formulate itself into coherence.

In the first instance, I listen to the voices of Aotearoa New Zealand, which have a specific focus and application here, in this unique location (3.1). Subsequently, I branch out further towards both local and international research, and texts, that promote multicultural educational; next I investigate research around ethnography, ethnodrama and ethnotheatre, and verbatim theatre (3.2); engaging with a Māori kaupapa, tikanga Māori and te ao Māori (3.3); *The New Zealand Curriculum* (2007), *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (2000), and the Westlake Boys’ Māori Education Plan (2016) (3.4); unpacking the aesthetic (3.5); the canon of theorists my research and aesthetic work draws upon: Brecht, Stanislavski and Brook, Schechner, Freire and Boal (3.6); and finally a section on embodied, somatic, aestheticized learning (3.7). Further literature will be discussed in the chapters that follow, wherein I discuss the processes I undertook with students designed to create aesthetic products. As a teacher-practitioner and director, the following literature are the primary sources that I draw upon. They may not influence every other theatre maker, but these are the theoretical works that I find relevant and operational for me, in my work and context(s).

In Aotearoa New Zealand terms, three researchers whose research theses have investigated areas that touch on my research interest are Tracey-Lynne Cody, Jane Luton and Zoe Brooks.

3.1 A New Zealand frame

Cody (2013), asserts in her thesis²⁴ that her “study offers the drama education community a deeper understanding of the current practice and salient issues facing drama teachers in New Zealand schools” (p. 5). The six teacher-practitioners she interviewed between 2008-2012 had “A broad vision for drama education, which extends learning beyond a technical knowledge of theatre and theatre-making towards the domains of social and personal meaning-making and emancipatory knowledge.” These teachers executed work through the “lenses of Artist and Co-artist”, aspiring toward “Aesthetically-rich learning experiences” for both student and teacher (Cody, p. i). The work of these teachers was to

develop interpersonal relationships with and between students, and establish ensemble-based approaches to learning in drama. As co-artists, participants employ pedagogies that empower students to actively participate in a community of drama practice, intentionally developing students’ capacities for collaboration, creativity and critical thinking, while discovering and developing their artistic-aesthetic capabilities. These teachers share power with students through acts of negotiation... to develop student agency as artists and citizens... (*and to*) ... avoid prescriptive and technocratic delivery of drama curriculum (Cody, 2013, p. i).

However, despite teachers’ aspiration and ambition and “apparent progress, several tensions exist for drama education in New Zealand” (Cody, p. 2). The “struggles many drama teacher educators face in retaining adequate hours, spaces and opportunity to practice practical arts pedagogies” limits the potential of the subject in schools, Cody contests (p. 3).

These concerns are shared by the teacher-practitioner participants in Zoe Brooks’ research²⁵ study (2010), which range from workload to resources to status within each teacher’s school. Milly, a teacher participant, reflected that “With NCEA²⁶ my workload is massive... I get tired and grumpy. Actually, I get really grumpy” (p. 180). Diane, another teacher, stated “So workload is massive. It’s the most stressful subject to teach in the school because of the performance” (p. 181). Stephen indicted that in regards of NCEA, “It affected the work in the classroom that I changed tack, and like

²⁴ *Drama education in New Zealand schools: the practice of six experienced drama teachers*. University of Canterbury Research Repository.

²⁵ *Assessing Creativity: The challenges associated with situating the performing arts, particularly drama, within a national framework of senior assessment*. Lambert Academic Publishing.

²⁶ The National Certificate of Educational Achievement.

so many teachers... the assessment system became the curriculum” (p. 185). Brooks’s research in her thesis,

compromises an enquiry into the perceptions of secondary drama teachers in New Zealand regarding the effect of the introduction of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) on teaching and learning in the secondary drama classroom... the genesis of the research study began with my own sense of unease about aspects of assessment in drama for this new national secondary school qualification (Brooks, p. 1).

Brooks’ “unease” is reflected in both Cody’s research and also Jane Luton’s²⁷, who describes the challenges faced by teacher-practitioners as “battles and barricades” (Luton, 2015, p. 21). Luton’s participants articulate their particular barricades: “the first barricade I always confront is this very situation here where we don’t have an empty space, we have a space of tables and chairs, (Lynn Fels)”, and “one of the characteristics of drama education is you have to spend an awful lot of time moving furniture. (John O’Toole)” (p. 110). Luton’s primary research questions is

How does a drama educator negotiate and sustain themselves through the ‘battles’ and ‘barricades’ inherent in the practice of drama in education? ...is it possible that a passion for drama can be sustained or that the battles and barricades can be negotiated? I wonder about those who have impacted on my own teaching who seem to have survived, even flourished. If I asked them, what would their reply be? (Luton, 2015, p. 12).

Cody’s research question is “*How do experienced drama teachers facilitate learning in drama in New Zealand schools?*” (Cody, 2013, p. 5). Her research recognises that for teachers to facilitate such learning they have developed profound skills in the execution of the aesthetic and in stage artistry, where “many secondary teachers are developing expertise in areas such as devised theatre and in producing school productions – including musical theatre, a variety of contexts and bicultural/multicultural performance” (p. 2). Cody explores the shared practice of teacher and student to explore the aesthetic in creative, co-constructed work: “Building on the notions of Plato and Aristotle, the aesthetic is conceived of as a kind of knowing, one that is connected to the feelings, senses and emotions” (p. 11). Her teacher-

²⁷ *Playing on the barricades: Embodied reflections on passion and melancholia in drama education by key practitioners.* University of Auckland.

participants reflect that “In theatrical contexts, the aesthetic may have more to do with the dynamic relationship that develops between the audience and the artwork, than with the artwork itself” (p. 11) and that there is a recognition that “aesthetic experience can transform us – individually, socially, culturally and politically – through the process of creating artistic forms and through experiences as an audience” (p. 21).

A particular notion of the aesthetic and a “kind of knowing” (Cody, 2013, p. 11) is articulated in Luton’s work, where, citing O’Connor & Anderson (2015, p. 26), she discusses embodying the reflections of her participants in a final summative performance. It is through “Performative enquiry” where we can reflect the world we know “through all our senses, through our bodies, and that we can sometimes better represent that knowledge through our bodies rather than through what comes from our mind alone” (Luton, p. 21). This for Luton is parts of the effectiveness of aesthetic work in performance. After all – as one of her participants (Andy Kempe) suggests – “what is the opposite of aesthetic? ... it’s anaesthetic. What is anaesthetic? It numbs you, it deadens you ... it sends you to sleep... So for Christ’s sake in education we ought to start understanding, appreciating the aesthetic, what is it that makes us feel alive” (Luton, p. 60).

Each of these three researchers (Cody, Brooks and Luton) articulates a foundation for artistic-aesthetic activity negotiated by teacher-practitioners with young adults in a school context, and/or describes the challenges, limitations and frustrations of the processes therein. What none of the three theses articulates is the microcosmic, day-to-day decision making that allows for this specific aesthetic rehearsal processes to occur and aesthetic products to eventuate, which is the focus of my PhD research.

However, in one further New Zealand-focused PhD research study, Trudy-Ann Barrett (2014) details an “examination of artmaking strategies that visual arts teachers may use to help adolescent students to develop and negotiate their sense of self” (p. V). The locus of her study was both in Christchurch, New Zealand and her home, Kingston, Jamaica. Barrett’s interest lies in the way “that artmaking is synonymous with meaning making, and the lens it provides to explore, process and share our relationships to the world” (p. 2). Through such exploration, she examines what “are the artmaking conditions that are conducive to promoting students’ negotiation of their personal and cultural selves” (p. 3), wondering can students “explore their personal and cultural selves in relation to contemporary issues?” (p. 7). Barrett, citing Gude (2000), contends that “art teachers’ capacities for innovation were

overshadowed by what she referred to as the “culture” of the curriculum” (p. 13), but Barrett hoped to teach beyond mere curriculum, attempting “to investigate the share that the art classroom as a formative place has in supporting the positive identities of students”, and using that same classroom to explore “the ways students ‘place’ themselves in the world” (p. 16). In her thesis, Barrett (citing Eisner, 2008; McNiff, 2008) applies an arts-based methodology, as it “privileged the arts as the principal means of uncovering more nuanced understandings of the ways that the participants experience their life worlds” and because of the unique way that the arts can be used “as a means for understanding and examining experience” (p. 29). Barrett recognises how “Many visual arts teachers at the lower secondary levels emphasize the art product, and assign less importance to student understandings of the artmaking process” (p. 251), privileging an appreciation of “formal and technical knowledge” (p. 252) above processes.

Although this research was undertaken in a visual arts field, the implications for my pedagogy and research are clear. With multiple foci, on identity, positionality, cultural identity and process over product, Barrett’s work is suggestive as to what might happen if her research was applied in a drama/theatre educational/pedagogical context.

Ho & Wang (2016) give a unique insight into the Chinese-New Zealand, and the international student, community through their research. Parents of international students and second-generation Chinese-New Zealanders hope that their children will “become ‘dragons’ in the future.” The notion of ‘dragon’ encompasses “the high status, good job and powerful position sought by Chinese parents for their one child” (Kavan and Wilkinson, 2003, p. 2). Because of this, “Chinese parents play a significant role in the selection of subjects for their children” (Ho & Wang, p. 195). Ho and Wang cite Peng (2014), who suggests that parents of Chinese-New Zealand children want to see their child developing competencies that will allow them to “meet the expectations of New Zealand education” including “multicultural personalities, social networks, English language ability, communication skills and New Zealand ways of studying.” Crucially, these same parents desire their child to gain “social and cultural capitals such as language and identity” (Ho & Wang, p. 200), whether in curriculum classes or as part of a “variety of extra-curricular programmes” (p. 204). By doing so, it is expected that these young adults will be able to “become successful members of the mainstream New Zealand community” (p. 204).

Ho and Wang focus their study in the broad school and curriculum realm experienced by their students, and do not drill down into either quantitative or qualitative data found in a specific curriculum area, such as drama. Part of the focus of this research, most notably in the chapter on *YouthQuake*, will look at how first-generation New Zealanders chose to position themselves during drama processes and through/within co-constructed theatre paradigms and products.

3.2 Ethnography, ethnodrama and ethnotheatre, and verbatim theatre

In my research on performance ethnography, ethnodrama and ethnotheatre, the three phrases are used often interchangeably. The defining and common characteristics of the three are that they are “a method of putting the critical sociological and socio-political imagination to work in understanding the politics and practices that shape human experience” (Denzin, 2003), and that “performance ethnography helps in establishing a critical site, an instance in which embodied experience meets social and theoretical knowing to establish a critical dialogue between researcher-performers and observers” (Garofalo, 1999, p. 67). Clifford (1998) asserts that we can better understand cultural identity not by studying it as an artefact in a museum, but through observing emergent cultural performances. Such performances have often been devised in part through a collaboration between performer, director, dramaturg and/or a writer. Tedlock (2006) affirms this position by stating that

Because culture is emergent in human interaction rather than located deep inside individual brains or hearts, or loosely attached to external material objects or impersonal social structures, dramas are a powerful way to both shape and show cultural construction in action (p. 470).

Verbatim theatre – alternatively defined as “contemporary documentary theatre” – complements performance ethnography in both my research and creative-aesthetic work:

verbatim refers to the origins of the text spoken in the play. The words of real people are recorded or transcribed by a dramatist during an interview or a research process... They are then edited, arranged, or recontextualised to form a dramatic presentation, in which actors take on the characters of the real individuals whose words are being used (Hammond & Steward, 2008, p. 9).

The origins of performance ethnography begin in ethnography, which for social scientists such as Geertz (1973), demands that anthropological study is undertaken from as close to the

perspective of the object of the study as possible: “The locus of study is not the object of the study. Anthropologists don’t study villages (tribes, towns, neighborhoods...); they study *in* villages” (p. 22). The researcher must recognise that,

Through his transaction with the situation, he shapes it and makes himself a part of it. Hence, the sense he makes of the situation must include his own contribution to it. Yet he recognizes that the situation, having a life of its own distinct from his intentions, may foil his projects and reveal new meanings (Schön, 1983, p. 163).

The researcher must shed normative, modernist, colonial perspectives on undertaking research, and humble him- or herself by recognising that

the reflective researcher cannot maintain distance from, much less superiority to, the experience of practice. Whether he is engaged in frame analysis, repertoire building, action science, or the study of reflection-in-action, he must somehow gain an inside view of the experience of practice (Schön, 1983, p. 323).

Building on Geertz and Schön, but in specifically dramatic-theatrical terms, Ackroyd & O’Toole (2010) believe that there are three factors that “Ethnographic performance” should possess. It “should grow as a collaboration between ethnographer and community”, it should also be creative action that is “Working towards building community identity” and that the work is focused on “foregrounding Histories” of its participants (p. 21). For Denzin (2003), performance ethnography is “literally the staged reenactment of the ethnographically derived notes” (p. 41), and for Conquergood it is a “way of knowing and a mode of understanding, as well as a method of critical inquiry” (1991, p. 187). Alexander (2006) believes that the power of performance ethnography is in its ability to enable an “understanding of other cultures and lived experiences” through a “body-centred method of knowing” (p. 411). It is an “embodied aesthetic practice coupled with a descriptive knowledge of lives and the conditions of living, to stir up feeling and provide for audiences to a critical social realisation and social response” (p. 411-412).

Robin Soans (2008) describes verbatim theatre as a form of theatre and performance that is both a social critique and overtly political. Audiences will “probably expect the material to be contentious and challenge their opinions... they will expect to be surprised by some of the revelations on offer” (p.19). For Soans, “One of the main differences between ‘created’ and ‘verbatim’ plays lies in the expectation of the audience, who enter the theatre with the

understanding that they are not going to be lied to” (p. 19), because the text will be a theatrical rendering of a first-person experience with minimal subjective interference from other theatrical crafts that might be used to frame the voice.

For Alexander, one of the guiding questions of performance ethnography is “How as researchers and performers in our reciprocal relationships do we negotiate and help to inform and/or transform the politics of class, notions of work ethic, cultural bias, and issues of pride and propriety?” (p. 418). He goes further to state that performance ethnography is “a *theater of performance* that, while framing the aesthetic event as part of entertainment, also reframes *the experience of performance ethnography from entertainment to social and intercultural dialogue*” (p. 420), and that it should also encourage “a dialogue and action that extends outside the specified site of performance and into the everyday realm of human social interaction” (p. 420). Engaging in processes that allow this to happen, to “democratise the classroom” enabling “our understanding of the unifying links between performance, pedagogy, culture, and social reform” (p. 424). It would be hoped that an effective piece of performance ethnography would be one where “audiences are compelled to gather with others, to see people perform live, hoping perhaps for moments of transformation that might let them reconsider and change the world outside the theatre” (Dolan, 2001b, p.455).

Kent, cited by Hammond & Steward (2008), describes how verbatim theatre (text and performance) allows for a spotlight to be focused on “a large injustice somewhere that needed highlighting, or a piece of history that was somehow obscured and needed some light shone on it” (p. 135). Often epic-dramatic, sweeping narratives born from complex court cases, or hard-to-penetrate political activity one reads about in the press, such stories needed to be humanised and given a human scale and experienced aesthetically, rather than as a redacted, edited literary narrative. However, verbatim is not a new phenomenon: from “Erwin Piscator’s ‘living newspaper’” of the 1920s to the “instant street theatre of the Theatre Workshop pioneers” to “Anna Deavere Smith’s one-person dramatisations” contemporary documentary theatre has a rich heritage to draw on” (p. 11). Aotearoa New Zealand also has created advocates for, and writers of, verbatim texts, as well as producers of verbatim performances, most notably William Brandt, Miranda Harcourt and Stuart McKenzie. Brandt, Harcourt and McKenzie wrote *Verbatim* (2014), in which “over thirty interviews were conducted with murderers and their families” (p. 12). A second play is also contained in the book, called “*Portraits*”, which shifts “the focus to the victim’s family members” (p. 13):

Not only were *Verbatim* and *Portraits* theatrically innovative, their themes were at the cutting edge of nationwide debates about restorative justice and victims' rights... they also showed the potential of live theatre to aid or facilitate the healing process in the wake of harrowing community experience (2014, p. 13).

Gallagher and Sallis (2019) do have a word of caution around ethical considerations, when undertaking ethnographic research, that results in a piece of performance ethnography. Sallis reflects that during his research he cherishes the moments when his student-subjects open up to him, as they become ever more relaxed. However, he recognises that such moments can be “ethically challenging too”, as “sometimes they reveal more intimate details of their life that goes beyond the scope of the project” (p. 38). Students “can feel safe in the environment of the drama class and this may lead them to them letting their guard down more so than they may do in other aspects of their life” (p. 38). Sallis recounts one student who “wanted to perform a scene he had written, knowing his parents would be in the audience.” The student intended to “use the scene he was writing to ‘come out’ to one of his parents via the performance” (p. 39). Sallis was torn between honouring the student’s story, position and narrative device, whilst safeguarding the other students acting in the ethnodrama, who were exposed to risk due to this choice. Sallis was also challenged between a need to protect the student in question without silencing him, whilst also protecting his rights to his performance ideas and identity (p. 40). In support of Sallis, Gallagher detailed the experience of equally compelling tensions in the rendering and execution of pieces of ethnodrama and ethnotheatre. She articulates a ‘talkback’ session after a performance, which “unleashed a wave of feelings” (p. 41). The audience made up of young adults, “were caught up in the energy” of the performance and its messages, which resulted in them “feeling compelled to reveal extremely personal... things about their own lives” (p. 41). Gallagher was “at once utterly shocked and moved by the power of theatre”, but conflicted as she observed young adults

compelled in a moment to share things that were deeply, deeply personal. And that they may suffer the consequences of that after, not in terms of having to face any of these people again, but having to face themselves and how they presented such an unguarded self-performance, and whether there would be any repercussions for anyone (p. 42).

For such audiences, Gallagher explained that the “aesthetic of the piece had swept them up so thoroughly that I wasn’t sure that they were thinking things through.” Such casual revelations

by this student audience, for Gallagher at least, reflect “a general culture of ‘reveal-all’ and of social media platforms, which are always about presenting one’s ‘true self’ and getting ‘liked’ for it” (p. 42). Gallagher also details her tension over her positionality in the workshop and rehearsal room, with young, trusting, student researcher-aesthetes. She now shares or performs a sense of self-doubt around her role as the all-knowing adult in the room. Gallagher’s status and aesthetic arbiter role in the room is therefore deliberately “‘on show’ and available for other people’s scrutiny” (p. 43). Sallis concurs with Gallagher’s dilemma and negotiated positionality. When the issue of the student who wanted to come out first happened, Sallis “kind of looked to the teacher of the class” presuming that they would provide a solution. However, the “teacher looked back at me as if to say, ‘well, what are *you* going to do about it?’” Such a confronting moment, in a carefully structured research project, with ethical considerations carefully plotted, was “quite sobering” for Sallis. He had to admit to himself that he “didn’t have an immediate answer for the situation” and faced the prospect of having to “confess this to others in the project as well” (p. 47). As a response, Sallis now approaches researching an ethnodrama and working with students by firstly “establishing a set of ethical protocols for how we’re going to work together”, involving “all the participants in that discussion, not only the teachers, as I once did” (p. 47). Gallagher now also approaches her practice differently, recognising that she can “over-rehearse certain kinds of risks/fears as scholars and practitioners”, whilst recognising that “we under-rehearse others” (p. 51).

For Fels (2012), the use of performative enquiry in order to collect research data is a powerful medium, which allows for “critical moments that emerge through creative action” (p. 50). Her form of performance ethnography rejects the tyranny of scripts, leaving in its place an open-ended, open-minded and open-hearted creative space in which she can listen “to the ideas of children in a new way, *with respect, with curiosity, with openness, a willingness to wonder and welcome*” (p. 51). Performative inquiry differs for Fels from performance ethnography, in that it does not provide a prescriptive “method nor steps to follow, but rather offers researchers and educators a way of inquiring into what matters as we engage in drama or theatre activities” (p. 51). Without an obligation to render the words of another (the playwright) into concrete aesthetic action, Fels found that in the greater creative-research space afforded her she was able to “focus on the emergent moment as a pedagogical action site of inquiry and learning” (p. 53). In such an “emergent moment”, she recalled Applebaum’s (1995) “stop”, which “*is a moment of risk, a moment of opportunity*” (p. 53).

“A stop arises when we are surprised or awakened to the moment”, alerting the researcher, educator or aesthete to a new, unconsidered possibility. A stop encourages the researcher to enjoy being positioned as someone curious, yet (positively) unsettled and unbalanced. In this moment, the teacher is encouraged to “recognize the politics of the moment, an emergent curriculum co-created by student and teacher, the imagining of something new that a child offers to awaken me from my slumber of habitual engagement” (p. 57). The moment that occurs because of this “stop speaks to the value of welcoming children’s voices and agency and understanding of curriculum” (p. 58). The stop makes the teacher recognise “the importance of incorporating a child’s presence”, it speaks to undermining perceived orthodoxy and hegemony, and positioning positive “authoritarian challenges” and “power differentials”; it “speaks to authorship” and the “value of listening” by the researcher (p. 58).

Performance ethnography and verbatim theatre, both in their form and aesthetic execution, have a rich lineage. However, my approach is not to employ either/both exclusively, but rather utilising fundamental aspects of either/both forms in order to create a unique a process or product. Both theatre forms were to be used as tools, along with other processes, to help shape student input into an aesthetic response in all three projects: *The Pohutukawa Tree*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *YouthQuake*. This approach is in line with Schechner’s assertion, that “It’s neither possible nor (in my opinion) desirable to keep forms ‘pure.’ The question is how to manage, and whether to limit, the promiscuous mixing of genres” (1985, p. 74).

3.3 Māori kaupapa, tikanga Māori and te ao Māori

Aotearoa New Zealand is a bicultural nation: through custom, law and practice. The indigenous Māori people of Aotearoa New Zealand, the tangata whenua, are not found anywhere else in the world. The roles, rights, and responsibilities of Pākehā and Māori are outlined in the Treaty of Waitangi, signed in 1840, and for teachers, referenced in *The New Zealand Curriculum* (2007): “The curriculum acknowledges the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi and the bicultural foundations of Aotearoa New Zealand.” It is preferred that “All students have the opportunity to acquire knowledge of te reo Māori me ōna tikanga” (p.9). This is Māori language (te reo) and Māori custom and practice (tikanga). Te reo Māori is seen as the most revered taonga (treasure) in te ao Māori, and crucial for students to learn, in order to better understand and engage with te ao Māori (the Māori world):

Te reo Māori is indigenous to Aotearoa New Zealand. It is a taonga²⁸ recognised under the Treaty of Waitangi, a primary source of our nation's self-knowledge and identity, and an official language... By learning te reo and becoming increasingly familiar with tikanga, Māori students strengthen their identities, while non-Māori journey towards shared cultural understandings (New Zealand Curriculum, 2007, p. 14).

A respect for, and practice of, te reo and tikanga occur daily in the lives of all New Zealanders, Māori, Pākehā as well as new migrants. These can be demonstrated in a Pōwhiri at a civil ceremony or at the start of a new school year; in a courthouse during a trial; in a karakia (prayer) in a church. Therefore, it is crucial that Māori kaupapa, tikanga Māori and te ao Māori are both researched and given a place in this literature review and thesis.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2005), a noted Māori scholar, details key questions that should be asked before engaging in research with tangata whenua or with issues found in the tension between te ao Māori and te ao Pākehā: "Whose research is it? Who has designed its questions and framed its scope? Who will carry it out? Who will write it up? How will its results be disseminated?" (p. 10). After all, it is reasonable that "Indigenous peoples want to tell our own stories, write our own versions, in our own ways, for our own purposes" (p. 29). This stands in opposition to "The globalisation of knowledge and Western culture" which "constantly reaffirms the West's view of itself as the centre of legitimate knowledge, the arbiter of what counts as knowledge and the source of 'civilized' knowledge" (p. 66).

Australian Aborigine scholar Lester Rigney (1999), emphasising Ward Churchill's (1993) earlier declarations of indigenist positioning, has argued for an indigenist approach to research that is formed around the three principles of resistance, political integrity, and privileging indigenous voices... Rigney argues that research must serve and inform the political liberation struggle of indigenous peoples (Smith, 2005, p. 89).

In the New Zealand space, Smith (2005) promotes a Kaupapa Māori approach, which is a particular approach that sets out to make a positive difference for Maori, that incorporates a model of social change or transformation, privileges Maori knowledge and ways of being, that sees the engagement in theory as well as

²⁸ (Noun) treasure, anything prized – applied to anything considered to be of value including socially or culturally valuable objects, resources, phenomenon, ideas and techniques.

empirical research as a significant task... Kaupapa Maori research comes out of the practices, value systems, and social relations that are evident in the taken for granted ways that Maori people live their lives (p. 90).

Another prominent Māori scholar, Russell Bishop (2005), posits a schema to allow for “Freeing Ourselves from Neocolonial Domination in Research: A Kaupapa Māori Approach to Creating Knowledge.” In his research and writing, he proposes a rejection of “a tradition of research that has perpetuated colonial power imbalances, thereby undervaluing and belittling Māori knowledge and learning practices and processes in order to enhance those of the colonizers and adherents of colonial paradigms” (p. 110). In opposition he suggests new “approaches to researching on/ for/ minoritized peoples by placing the culture of an ethnic group at the centre of the enquiry” (Tillman, 2002, p.4). Avoiding the mistakes of “traditional researchers” is crucial where they have

misrepresented Māori understandings and ways of knowing by simplifying, conglomerating, and commodifying Māori knowledge for “consumption” by the colonisers. These processes have consequently misrepresented Māori experiences, thereby denying Māori authenticity and voice... As a result, Māori people are deeply concerned about the issue of to whom researchers are accountable (p. 111).

Tillman (2002) argues that it need not be that the researcher is indigenous to the community but that the researcher has “cultural knowledge to accurately interpret and validate the experiences” of the indigenous group being studied (p. 4). A kaupapa Māori approach reflects this hope through “the operationalization of self-determination (*tino rangatiratanga*) by Māori people” or Māori researchers, or practitioners. Citing Durie (1995), Bishop helps define self-determination/*tino rangatiratanga* as a way to capture “a sense of Maori ownership and active control over the future”, and a way for Māori to “to determine their own policies, to actively participate in the development and interpretation of the law, show responsibility for their own affairs” (p. 16).

As a non-Māori researcher, it is essential that one seeks “inclusion on Maori terms in terms of kin/metaphoric kin relationships and obligations – that is, within Maori constituted practices and understandings – in order to establish their identity within research projects” (p. 129). To successfully do so might be achieved through a “processes of whakawhanaungatanga”, which “establishes interconnectedness, commitment, and engagement, within culturally constituted

research practices... it is suggested that researchers address the concerns and issues of the participants in ways that are understandable and able to be controlled by the research participants” (p. 124).

What Smith, Bishop, Tillman et al are positing is how the researcher should conduct themselves in research undertaken with an indigenous community. In my research and thesis, what I am interested in is researching indigeneity and indigenous issues with drama students, in a drama setting, through dramatic play and performance. One of the objectives is to inculcate an empathetic sensitivity towards tangata whenua and towards ourselves, recognising whakapapa, as all who call Aotearoa ‘home’ have roots somewhere else in the world. The locus of the research is also constituted: it is a drama studio – a space for exploration, experimentation and re-imagining new communities and multicultural societies.

O’Toole (2006), recognises that “Drama itself is one of the best and safest ways of investigating society and speculating on possible new societies” (p. 4), and that drama research “deals with interpersonal relationships, role, power and context as central to a consideration of research outcomes” (p. 15). However, the specific needs of communities of research are not always met. Citing Smith (1999), O’Toole recognises that in terms of research with and about Māori, “Years of research have frequently failed to improve the conditions of the people who are researched. This has led many to believe that researchers are simply intent on taking or stealing knowledge” (p. 176). To enable Māori communities to be fully satisfied Smith (again cited by O’Toole, 2006) suggests a

tiaki or mentoring model, where ‘authoritative Maori people guide and sponsor the research’, and the whangai or adoption model where ‘researchers are incorporated into the daily life of Maori people and sustain a lifelong relationship which extends far beyond the realms of the research’ (Smith, 1999, p. 177).

For a Pākehā researcher to thrive in an aesthetic-creative bicultural context such as Project #2 – *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* – I would need to humble myself and recognise a tiaki model of mentor and mentee. For success of this model, the mentee would have to publicly recognise the “Wehi” of the mentor and allow the creative participants room to also recognise this relationship. The “Wehi is the effect that one person’s power and influence has on another. One person recognises the superior power and influence of another in comparison with his or her own” (Barlow, 2002, p. 161). To facilitate this model, it is also appropriate to consider the use of tikanga, or recognised Māori protocols, in the execution of creative-

aesthetic work. To avoid the appearance of (or actual) tokenism and/or cultural appropriation, the rehearsal space should have echoes of the marae and protocols of the “hui”:

The hui has a life and validity of its own that is quite independent of anthropology. The actors move about on the marae with certainty, their activities follow in due order, and the total event is regulated by series of clearly understood rules (Salmond, 1990, p. 210).

Further to this, for a Pākehā researcher and aesthete working within a Māori frame, it is important to recognise the impact of “Te Hara”. Te hara is a sense of either “guilt” or “fear” of prior colonial oppression or current neo-colonial failures, or between hapu or iwi it could be perceived as an error that has impacted a Māori community or relations. In broader terms, Richie (1992) draws attention to the warning from history where “The infliction of Western cultural values on the people has done enormous damage to their cultural integration. Never forget the harm that has resulted” (p. 61). As a Pākehā working in a multicultural setting, albeit one that still has firm roots in a mid-20th Century monocultural institutional sense of self, I recognise and baulk at the “problems arising from the monocultural assumptions and practices within the institutions of general New Zealand culture, such as schools and the justice system... and a thousand other daily sources of difficulty” (Ritchie, 1992, p. 8). With these Western-normative, colonial reminders around me I embrace Smith’s (2012) warning that

Indigenous peoples across the world have other stories to tell which not only question the assumed nature of those ideals and the practices that they generate, but also serve to tell an alternative story: the history of Western research through the eyes of the colonized (p. 2).

To counter te hara, in my teaching and creative work I strive to live up to the values of “**Manaakitanga** *In everything you do care for the people*” (Ritchie, 1992, p. 60), inculcating in myself and others a culture and community of care. “Manaakitanga is reciprocal, unqualified caring. Why should I care for you? I should care for you because one day you will care for me” (ibid, p.75).

Smith (2014), posits that when undertaking research within, or of, indigenous contexts, we might re-imagine the researcher-researched relationship and engagement as being akin to a first contact experience on the marae: the pōwhiri. Here the protocols, or tikanga of a pōwhiri are symbolic of what can positively happen through research, “when researchers are actually

invited in by a community.” As a consequence, “an indigenous community is actively engaged in its own well-being, rather than a reflection on what has historically happened when ethnographers have invited themselves in” (p. 15). A more co-constructed mode of research relationship is crucial, as, after all, the indigenous community being researched exists, “in the twenty-first Century, no longer naïve about research” (p. 16). Smith argues that it is essential in the 21st Century for this new “generation of researchers” (p. 17), to ask fundamental questions of themselves and to reflect upon the answers. Questions such as “1. How did you come to be here at the entry point of this community?” For example, “Were you invited” and/or “Where have you come from?” And “2. Who is your community?” especially, “(a) Who are your research ancestors?” For Smith,

Ethicality, in my view, is a ‘way of being’ for a social science researcher, for an ethnographer... It is one of the most fundamental tools for engagement with participants and is not simply a process for gaining entry into a community (p. 18).

If teacher and student can embrace these notions of tikanga Māori and te ao Māori in his or her creative-aesthetic work, then maybe “Pakeaka” might be attainable, and an aesthetic product preceded by an aesthetic process that moved

towards the experience of living together and of making... It also allowed participants to re-examine roles they usually took... The long term aim was to create a third face for New Zealand: that of a dynamic biculturalism... For many of the thousands who participated in Pakeaka, the experience constituted a first journey into a previously unknown space. It offered them a chance to physically cross the threshold into a Māori world... The term Pakeaka relates to the threat of conflict. It refers to that stage of conflict when two war parties have come together but then stop and take each other’s measure before entering combat. They back off and re-assess each other’s strength. This backing off period is called Pakeaka... there is time, before taking action, to think again. There is the possibility of a completely different outcome (Greenwood & Wilson, 2006, p. 5/6).

3.4 *The New Zealand Curriculum* (2007), *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (2000) and boys' school Māori Education Plan (2016)

Three documents that are a crucial foundation for processes and products that are described in this research are *The New Zealand Curriculum* (2007), *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (2000), and my school's Māori Education plan (2016). This last document was written by me whilst working as the Māori Dean.

The first document, *The New Zealand Curriculum* (2007), or NZC, articulates the need for a new curriculum, to replace the previous iteration, in the following way:

The previous curriculum, implemented from 1992 onwards, was our first outcomes-focused curriculum: a curriculum that sets out what we want students to know and to be able to do. Since it was launched, there has been no slowing of the pace of social change. Our population has become increasingly diverse, technologies are more sophisticated, and the demands of the workplace are more complex. Our education system must respond to these and the other challenges of our times (NZC, 2007, p. 4).

A helpful way to understand the structure of the NZC is to look over the schematic of the document, its contents and their interconnectedness, as detailed in Figure 2 that follows.

Overview

A schematic view of this document

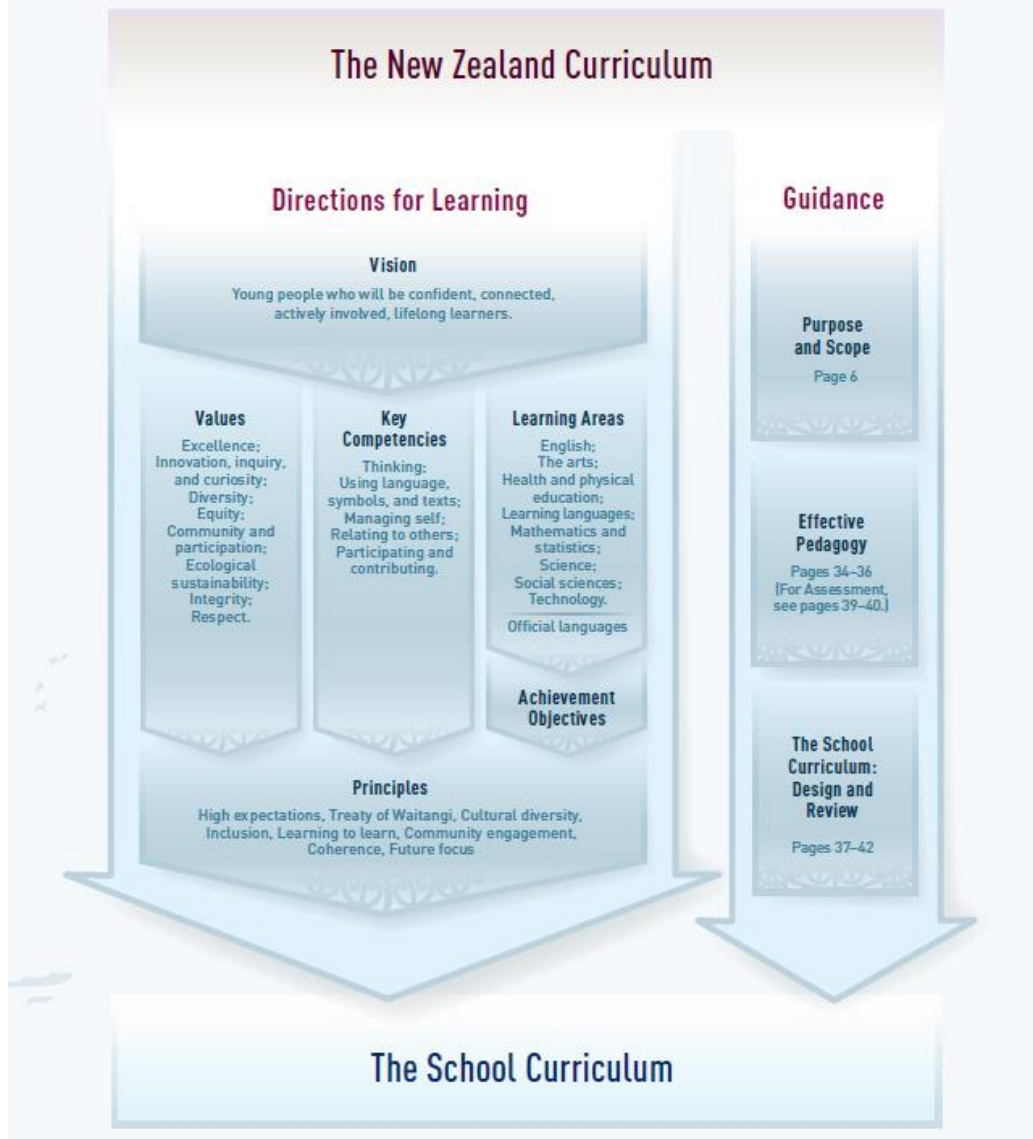


Figure 2. A schematic representation of the NZC

Obviously, the entire curriculum document has relevance for me as an educator, but I do not intend to give a full critique of the document, but rather draw out threads that are relevant to the research and educational-aesthetic work that I planned to undertake. In the “Vision” section – “What we want for our young people” (NZC, p. 8), the curriculum requires that students are afforded opportunities to be “creative, energetic, and enterprising” and encouraged to “work to create an Aotearoa New Zealand in which Māori and Pākehā recognise each other as full Treaty partners, and in which all cultures are valued for the

contributions they bring” (p. 8). To enable such opportunities to form into tangible outcomes, the NZC proposes that students must be empowered to be “Confident” and “Positive in their own identity”, and “Connected”, in that they are able to “relate well to others” (p. 8). The “Principles” section focuses on the “Foundations of curriculum decision making” (p. 9), and that these principles “embody beliefs about what is important and desirable in school curriculum”, placing “students at the centre of teaching and learning, and that “they should experience a curriculum that engages and challenges them, is forward-looking and inclusive, and affirms New Zealand’s unique identity” (p. 9). The principles section also recognises biculturalism and the Treaty of Waitangi in one of its subsections, outlining that the “curriculum acknowledges the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi and the bicultural foundations of Aotearoa New Zealand.” As a consequence, all students should be afforded “the opportunity to acquire knowledge of te reo Maori me ona tikanga” (p. 9). In the same section the NZC also recognises “Cultural Diversity” and that the execution of curriculum should reflect “New Zealand’s cultural diversity and values the histories and traditions of all its people” (p. 9). Asserting a bicultural-multicultural-pluralist approach to education, the NZC also recognises the importance of “Inclusion”, asserting that any execution of “curriculum is non-sexist, non-racist, and non-discriminatory; it ensures that students’ identities, languages, abilities, and talents are recognised and affirmed and that their learning needs are addressed” (p. 9).

My research and creative processes in all three dramatic projects, leading to dramatic products, intended to honour, reflect and build upon the NZC, but especially these areas outlined, due to their relevance and primacy in my drama teaching work. The recognition and honouring of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and biculturalism will be the focus of Project #2: *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, whereas multiculturalism and pluralism will be the focus of Project #3: *YouthQuake*.

The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum (2000), differs from the NZC (2007) in that it is a focused “statement for the essential learning area of the arts” (p. 5). It expresses how

Learning in all four disciplines is essential for a comprehensive education in the arts. *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* provides students with opportunities to express themselves through making and presenting art works. Students will also respond to and interpret others’ art works and learn about diverse art forms from both within and beyond New Zealand. Such learning

includes developing an understanding of art forms in relation to the tangata whenua, to biculturalism in New Zealand, and to the multicultural nature of our society and its traditions (p. 7).

The Arts Curriculum recognises that “The arts are powerful forms of personal, social, and cultural expression” and “unique ‘ways of knowing’ that enable individuals and groups to create ideas and images that reflect, communicate, and change their views of the world” (p. 9). The arts “stimulate imagination”, “challenge our perceptions”, “entertain us, and enrich our emotional and spiritual lives”, and “help to shape our sense of identity” (p. 9). The arts are not just to be pursued with the hope of becoming an artist, but because students might also “pursue careers outside the arts using analytical, creative, co-operative, entrepreneurial, and problem-solving skills that have been enhanced through learning in the arts” (p. 9).

Learning about, in and through the arts also allows students to acquire social and emotional literacies, which “are as important to people who make art as to its audiences. Makers and presenters of art works need to develop literacy in order to structure ideas and communicate meaning” (p. 11). “Developing literacies... enables students to grow and to contribute to their schools, communities, and cultures” (p. 11). The structure of the Arts Curriculum (and drama within it) allows for learning through “four interrelated strands”:

- Developing Practical Knowledge in the Arts
- Developing Ideas in the Arts
- Communicating and Interpreting in the Arts
- Understanding the Arts in Context

Figure 3. The four strands of the Arts Curriculum

The Arts Curriculum defines the core business of drama as the “expression of ideas, feelings, and human experience through movement, sound, visual image, and the realisation of role” (p. 36). It also recognises that “Drama permeates our everyday lives and serves a variety of purposes. It enables us to understand ourselves, the people around us, and the world in which we live, enriching the lives of individuals and giving voice to communities” (p. 36).

Furthermore, “Drama both expresses and is defined by the culture from which it emerges” (p. 36), and “enables students to link their own imaginations, thoughts, and feelings with drama practice and history in ways that give voice to the cultural diversity of New Zealand” (p. 37). By engaging in drama, students “gain understandings about themselves and their wider

communities” (p. 37) and are provided “significant opportunities for expressing cultural and personal identity” (p. 37).

Beyond the strands (Figure 3), Achievement Objectives are expressed at eight levels, describing the “scope and parameters for learning, and identify the particular skills, knowledge, and understanding to be developed” in drama and the other arts subjects (p. 15). Each level “builds on learning from previous levels”, assisting “students to learn in depth” (p. 15). The Arts Curriculum also details exemplars of how a teacher might structure a course of study through its Learning Examples. For example, at Level 5 (Year 9/10) a student could show achievement at this level through one of the Learning Examples below:

LEARNING EXAMPLES	
■ Develop a group drama, using techniques and conventions (e.g., conversations, mapping, role on the wall) to create an imagined community.	PK DI
■ Investigate and describe how different cultures make use of symbols in ritual and ceremony. Create a symbol that represents a theme or issue and use it in a devised ritual or ceremony, incorporating sound and movement. Present the ritual or ceremony and discuss the effectiveness of the symbol in the performance.	UC PK DI CI
■ Devise, rehearse, and make an audio recording of a soundscape to accompany, and reinforce ideas and feelings in, a mimed sequence. View the mime with its accompaniment and discuss how the use of sound enhanced meaning in the mime.	PK DI CI

Figure 4. Learning Examples from the Arts Curriculum (2000).

The letters in orange, at the end of each example in Figure 4, relate to the interrelated strands: “PK” is Developing Practical Knowledge in the Arts; “DI” is Developing Ideas in the Arts; “UC” is Understanding the Arts in Context, and; “CI” is Communicating and Interpreting in the Arts.

What the Arts Curriculum reminds me – along with the NZC – is that the broad intellectual-creative parameters of what needs to be, and might be, addressed in curricula is rich, diverse, exciting, challenging and questioning. A recognition and desire to action the philosophical underpinnings of both documents, acts as an inoculation against the too easy reliance on utilising NCEA Achievement Standards, which are purely an assessment tool, as an alternative, de facto curriculum (Brown, 2010; Davidson, 2012). To develop such a curriculum, from this standpoint, would be flawed and reductivist, denying the rich possibilities that knowledge of that Arts Curriculum and the NZC provides.

In 2015, I was appointed as Kaitiaki (Māori Dean) at my school, looking after the intellectual, pastoral and cultural care of the 125 students who nominated themselves as Māori. To help

better understand my Māori students, and to gain insight into their needs and how they were positioned, I undertook a modest survey of the Māori cohort. After this was completed, the data led myself and my line manager to consider a. how we could disseminate the data, and b. how the data could be used to benefit the student, staff and whānau bodies. Thus, the Māori Educational Plan (Brown, 2016) was (re)written²⁹. The strategic purpose of the Māori Education Plan was to

outline the strategic pathway being taken by the school's Senior Leadership Team (SLT), in collaboration with the school's key stakeholders: Māori students, parents, the Whānau Board, the Kaitiaki (Māori Dean), Deans, staff and Māori staff.

The focus of the Education Plan is to outline the foundations, processes and direction the school wishes to travel in, in order to successfully support all Māori students to achieve as Māori. It is a guide for SLT and teachers alike, and will be made available to any other interested party, keen to engage with it (p. 2).

The Māori Educational Plan built upon existing documents, such as the Whole School Strategic Plan and especially point #2, focusing on "Biculturalism in a multicultural environment":

School Strategic Plan, #2:

The school will improve the wellbeing of all students and staff by making the school more welcoming to its many cultures, by making it a genuinely bicultural institution, and by increasing all students' sense of belonging:

- The cultural competencies of ako, whanaungatanga, tangata whenuatanga, manaakitanga and wānanga, which emphasise partnership, community and belonging, will underpin all of our teaching and learning and interactions with our communities;
- We will have a genuinely bicultural ethos and physical environment, and will begin to develop a plan for a school Marae;
- We will be a school that reviews itself consistently against our bicultural and multicultural priorities to ensure that we increasingly reflect our diverse community;

²⁹ Previously, there had been a modest collection of documents, but no formal, structured plan had existed extant before.

- Reciprocal consultation will be embedded into self-review practices;
- Teachers will have the ongoing support through their professional development programmes to ensure that the school can, over time, become a genuinely bicultural institution within a multicultural environment (p. 5).

In essence, the board, SLT, students and staff were dedicated to creating “a school context, which is truly bicultural and recognises the place and value of Tangata Whenua”, and where “all staff and parents/whānau” are invited “to address the relative underachievement of our Māori students, relative to their Pākehā contemporaries” (p. 3). The Māori Education Plan recognises that “the current patterns of school & student performance” at the school “can limit our Māori students achieving to their potential” The plan also recognises that the school “has some way to go to before it can declare itself a truly bicultural school. However, the plan posits a variety of corrective practices, with which all can engage, to the benefit of our Māori students, and the student body as a whole” (p. 3).

Whilst writing the Māori Education Plan (Brown, 2016), one of the most revealing sections was where “Māori Student Voice” (p. 6) was engaged with. Māori students were invited to answer 11 questions that related to their experience of being Māori and a student at the school. These questions were answered in either small groups or alone; responded to in written or verbal form. Of the eleven questions, responses to questions 2., 5., 6., and 8. are the most instructive:

Kia ora kotou katoa. The purpose of this discussion process is to gain some understanding around how Māori students see themselves as students at school. I am especially keen to see how well they are served as young Māori, and if and where they are not being fully supported and nourished. With this knowledge we can then consider changes to benefit Māori students.

Below are the questions that I would like us to use in the discussion, but feel free to allow the students to drift on and off topic, if it benefits the ambition of the discussions.

1. Can you describe what it is like for you (in general terms) to be a student at High School?
2. Can we please ask how you see yourself as a young Māori adult: how connected are you to your Marae, whanau, iwi/hapu or elements of Māoridom/Māoritanga?


 *Of those that answered, 95% said “yes, I feel connected” and 5% “less so”. Those that stated yes, listed experiences such as tangi, whanau get-togethers and a sense of whanaungatanga. One student described himself as “disconnected”.*

Figure 5. Response to Q2 of the Māori Student Voice Questionnaire

Question 5. asked Māori students if they felt that they were “well-nourished, supported, and nurtured” as Māori at school, to which the response was affirmative, but only by “some

teachers”. It appeared that “nourishment” was “dependent on the teacher” and that Māori students wished for greater “opportunity to be supported/nurtured as Māori.” Another student noted that “support of Māori students was evident within sports contexts but was lacking in the classroom” (p. 6/7). Question 6. looked at a “class culture” in which “Māori students are thriving”, and what does it look like. It is “loud”, stated one student, and there is a “strong student connection between peers”, where “students are not treated as individuals but are a community.” The class is “interactive”, and the “class is physical/hands-on”. Furthermore, “student welfare is more important than the material being studied” and whakawhanaungatanga is evident as “positive relationships are modelled and expected in class” (p. 7).

Question 8. asked “What staples of good teaching are evident when a class is supporting and successfully nurturing Māori students?” In response, Māori students reflected that “fun and pleasure is a class focus” and that there is “a strong visual element” in the teaching. Furthermore, the “class is social”, and there is “a comfort or mutual respect between teacher and student.” Finally, “banter and (a) social quality” in the class is encouraged, whilst maintaining a “focused, positive interaction between class and teacher” (p. 7).

Although the Māori Education Plan focuses primarily on Māori (under)achievement, and processes and practice that can be undertaken to better support Māori students, the plan is a platform that can be built upon. Such building would be through creating dramatic-aesthetic products that can support and nourish the Māori student community, whilst also building knowledge, understanding and empathy in non-Māori students engaged in the same processes and practice. Such practice can be read about in Project 2: *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

3.5 Explorations with, in, through and about the aesthetic

In the first section (3.1), I began to indicate how working with the aesthetic is an area of practice that each drama teacher-practitioner should be cognisant of, if they are to create efficacious work in class. The power of the aesthetic lies both in how we use knowledge of it to shape creative work – in collaboration with students – and in how we use knowledge of the aesthetic to help shape intellectual responses to work where the aesthetic is at play. Philip Taylor reminds us that through an “aesthetic education we are seeking new perspectives, we are breaking with the familiar, the mundane” (2000, p. 113). Taylor cites Maxine Green, who describes how working in or with the aesthetic allows teachers to be “awakened” (1998). This is also echoed in Andy Kempe’s words from Luton’s thesis (2015), where he asks what

defines the aesthetic in opposition to the anaesthetic: “What is anaesthetic? It numbs you, it deadens you... it sends you to sleep... appreciating the aesthetic... makes us feel alive” (Luton, 2015, p. 60). Cody (2013) asserts that “Most arts educators are of the belief that aesthetic experience can transform us” both “through the process of creating artistic forms” as actors, writers and directors, as well as “through experiences as an audience” (p. 21). Cody reminds us of Boal’s assertion (1996) when he states that “We are in rehearsal for the real world, when the aesthetic space disappears and people go home” (p. 49). His contention being that the performance is a rehearsal for the revolutionary act that naturally follows the affective, aesthetic creative act. Boal continues, articulating how an “aesthetic communication” is one that allows for “communication through the sense and not by reason alone” (Boal, p. 49). Elliott (1973) reinforces this notion, by underlining the power of imagination to communicate certain ‘truths’ that reason alone cannot comprehend: “Imagination breaks the domination of our ordinary habits of conception and perception – including aesthetic perception – which seems to bind us absolutely to the given world” (p. 113). This, it can be argued, is likely because actors and audience members intuitively recognise the “aesthetic dimension of an art product” leading to a sense that “aesthetic meanings are felt rather than comprehended. The universal meanings... are ‘embodied’ within the action” (Bolton, 1984, p. 147).

The physical-visceral nature of drama/theatre-making – as opposed to the nature and quality of other art forms – compels us to consider the aesthetic.

Building on the notions of Plato and Aristotle, the aesthetic is conceived of as a kind of knowing, one that is connected to the feelings, senses and emotions.

Derived from the Greek word *aisthetika* and *aisthanesthai*, aesthetics refers to feeling and/or perceiving through the senses. While anaesthetic deadens the senses, the aesthetic heightens them (Cody, 2013, p. 7).

The aesthetic is at play during the physical-visceral-emotional making of, or watching of, the creative act, (Jackson, 2005) and also in the sensuous nature of the same (Abbs, 1993). Because of this, the aesthetic is a far “broader category than art” alone, and needs to be recognised as such (Cody, p. 11).

The aesthetic is not just discovered in, and communicated through, normative performances of assumed artistic merit. Kershaw (1992) contends that the aesthetic can be found in

political, agitatory-propogandist theatre and “alternative theatre”, and in an “aesthetics of protest” (p. 8).

Greenwood (2011), argues that the aesthetic is “a term that eludes definition” and that the art of “drama and theatre is complex, culturally situated, and forever renegotiating the expectations and boundaries of previous work” (p. 1). She proposes to take a “non-normative, fluid and multi-faceted approach to the aesthetic, acknowledging it as complex” (p. 2), whilst also acknowledging that it

Gives us experience, both embodied through our participation and empathetic through exploring another’s world. It allows us to absorb a multiplicity of new stimuli, cognitive and visceral, that we can unpack and play with. It permits ambiguity, incompleteness, contradiction and complexity, and provides a means to express them without reducing them. And perhaps more (Greenwood, p. 4).

In my research and aesthetic-creative work (undertaken with the students) I am building upon these notions of the aesthetic, detailed by the researchers, whilst also looking for ways to be collaborative, co-constructing creative products through a shared and developing notion of the aesthetic. The aesthetic is in flux and there is not a normative, homogenous approach to aesthetic products; each process, used to create a dramatic-theatrical product, needs to be open, flexible and unique, reflecting the demands of that aesthetic journey.

3.6 A canon of theorists: Stanislavski, Brecht and Brook; Schechner, Freire and Boal

Konstantin Stanislavski’s approach to directing theatre and dramatic role representation was a rejection of the predominant form of the time, and a desire to place something authentic, truthful and psychologically credible upon the stage, (Benedetti, 1998 & 2000; Magarshack, 1950; Mitter, 1992). During his career, what Stanislavski achieved was the creation of “methods which assist actors to capture, through carefully structured means, the elusive advantages of inspiration” (Mitter, 1992, p. 2). Concepts, processes such as the ‘magic if’ allowed actor’s reason and logic to stimulate intuitive-creative responses to provocation: “I know that everything by which I am surrounded on the stage... is all make believe. But if it were real... then this is how I would act.” The actor’s concern therefore is focused “with truth, not artifice” (ibid, p. 7). The execution of role on stage “for Stanislavsky is not nemesis, it is metamorphosis” (ibid, p. 10). Further processes that actors underwent in training and rehearsal, such as the ‘given circumstances’ (Benedetti, 1998 & 2000; Mitter, 1992), enabled actors to move from the rational-intellectual to a bodily way of knowing and

communicating. Stanislavski taught actors and drama students to work “somatically, that is directly from the body to the emotions” (Mitter, p. 19). Stanislavski encouraged the actor to nourish the intellect through exercise and research, but in the crucible of rehearsal not to think, as when an actor starts to debate and reason then the will to act is diminished (Benedetti, 1998 & 2000). “Don’t discuss, just do it” (Mitter, 1992, p. 23). Peter Brook also toyed with a somatic approach, describing to Charles Marowitz (1967) how in the Royal Shakespeare Company production of *King Lear* that “the work of rehearsals is looking for meaning and then making it meaningful. The order of activities is important: action is the product of thought; the body executes what the mind has already formulated” (p. 135).

Stanislavski’s usefulness in a school workshop and rehearsal process, is in the ubiquity of his method in the zeitgeist: in television, film and theatre. A realist/realism approach to both role and towards an aesthetic is often known (if not recognised) by students, providing a firm platform from which to work from (Benedetti, 1998 & 2000). It is also relatively easily unpacked. But in a postmodern context and process, I am keen to mix and meld approaches to create a learning context that reflects multiculturalism and pluralism and rejects orthodoxy and homogeneity. That is why I endeavour to reject a purely Stanislavskian/“system” approach (Benedetti, 2000) and mix theatre theorists and practitioners in my creative work. A counterpoint to Stanislavski is that of Bertolt Brecht, who provides a contrasting, stylised and meta-theatrical aesthetic to play with, whose form allows for recognition and easy-identifiable manipulation by the student actors and director.

Schechner recognises the power of rehearsal, workshopping and performance, in which “Either permanently... or temporarily... performers – and sometimes spectators too – are changed by the activity of performing” (1985, p. 4). This can be found in multicultural theatre groups and/or communities where

many non-Westerners have participated in experimental performance. This has led to the development of intercultural companies and a marvelously complicated exchange of technique and concepts that can no longer be easily located as belonging to this culture or that one. This dialogue relating modern, traditional, and postmodern elements even takes place within single nations... where deep learning takes place, eventuating in artistic works that may not at all look like what they have come from (p. 24).

Such a postmodern focus on experimentation rejects the outdated ‘museum piece’ theatre reproductions (Kershaw, 1992), such as the aesthetic works of Stanislavski or Brecht after their deaths, where “If during a rehearsal of one of Brecht’s plays... it is suspected that some gesture is not being performed as Brecht intended it, the gesture is checked back against the Modelbuch... It is the authority” (Schechner, 1985, p. 43). Such theatre is fixed, immutable, “deadly” (Brook, 1968, p. 11). However, “performance originals disappear as fast as they are made. No notation, no reconstruction, no film or videotape recording can keep them. What they lose first and most importantly is their immediacy, their existence in a specific space and context.” As time passes, so does the aesthetic work’s traction, because the “the occasion is different, the world view is different, the audience is different, and the performers are different” (Schechner, 1985, p. 50). For Schechner, in the final analysis, “It’s neither possible nor (in my opinion) desirable to keep forms ‘pure.’ The question is how to manage, and whether to limit, the promiscuous mixing of genres” (p. 74). Schechner proposes a way to shape an aesthetic that recognises the power of existing texts with new ways of working: “I want to work with both old and new material: to explore the mythic qualities of classics whose stories and characters are ingrained in the culture; and yet to use postmodern and intercultural techniques of preparation and staging” (p. 229). He recognises a “double tug”, in that he aims, as a director, “to neither interpret old texts nor compose wholly new ones but practice a kind of theatrical bricolage, deconstructing/reconstructing texts and mises-en-scènes from a variety of sources”, rejecting the normative “mainstream Euro-American theater” that “still works from literary texts” (p. 230). In Schechner’s theory of the stage, he recognises that a “workshop” process needs to precede the rehearsal and performance. A workshop can be used for “personal growth” of the actor, “or for acquiring skills”, or as means of “active research for a performance. These functions overlap, but usually the emphasis is on one or another” (p. 286). The workshop phase is a period of aesthetic exploration and therefore one in which the actor is vulnerable and requires space to be a risk-taker. If undertaken correctly, then “What happens at workshops like this is not only a deconstruction of the text and narrative of the play being done... but also a parallel deconstruction of the lives of the performers.” Workshops and workshopping are essential because most “productions are not allowed enough time” to “grasp the process I am talking about – to separate the deconstruction phase from the reconstruction. People too soon are doing the work of rehearsal” (p. 287). To further articulate the relationship between workshop and rehearsal and production performances, Schechner (p. 289) created the diagram that follows:

“Figure 6.4. *This process can also be represented as a movement from a public space to private space and back into public space.”*

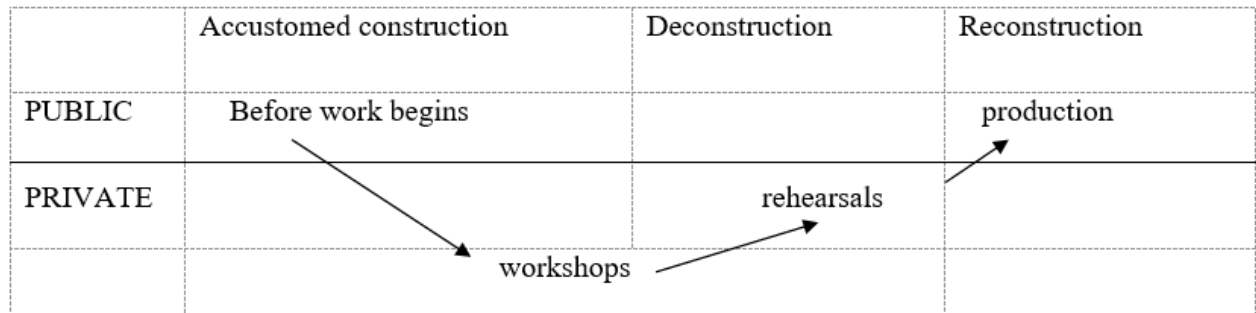


Figure 6. Schechner’s model

As Rasmussen (1996) notes, Schechner’s work is partly characterised by its playfulness and flexibility around aesthetic boundaries, its “liminality”: “Here playing as ‘playing with’ is a key concept – playing with any established truth, questioning norms and rules of relation and behaviour. This stage of ambiguity, liberation, antistructure is, however, a controlled transgression” (p. 134). “Playing with” in a postmodern, multicultural or intercultural context, as, say one created in a school, allows for a teacher “to establish a process in which the boundaries are exceeded and the experience of difference itself is produced” (Carasso, 1996, p. 225).

The implications for such a rehearsal methodology as Schechner’s suggests is a possibility of affecting “change in our school systems so they become more culturally responsive to diverse student populations and welcoming to diverse teachers, which might allow participants “to communicate through conflict, breaking down barriers to social change” (Cahnmann-Taylor & Souto-Manning, 2010, p. 1). After all, “Although there are many opportunities to read about the possibility for individual and social transformation, there are too few opportunities for educators to rehearse possibility and prepare to make change happen” (p. 5).

Political theatre theorist, activist and theatre maker Augusto Boal overtly modified educator and philosopher Paulo Freire’s book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), adapting notions of radical education to radical performative action. Boal’s *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1974) was released just four years after Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. In the latter, Freire proposes a revolutionary realignment of the relationship between student, teacher and society: what is needed is “A revolutionary leadership” one that “must accordingly practice co-

intentional education.” In this new arrangement, “Teachers and students (leadership and people), co-intent on reality, are both Subjects, not only in the task of unveiling that reality, and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge” (Freire, p. 51).

Freire identified “Banking education,” whereby teachers “deposit” information into students’ “accounts,” enabling a continuation of a societal-hierarchical status quo, which would “weaken democratic participation” (Cahnmann-Taylor & Souto-Manning, 2010, p. 25).

Freire rejected “this monologic, top-down style of education” and offered a “problem-posing education” as an alternative, a way to challenge the status quo. Freire wrote about a teaching philosophy that prides itself on the blurring of the roles of teacher and learner (Freire, 1998b). In applying this pedagogy, the “teacher would base inquiry on learners’ prior knowledge, experiences, and critical questions about his or her own community” (p. 26). Freire rejected “banking” promoting instead a “drive towards reconciliation. Education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers and students” (Freire, 1970, p. 53). “Those truly committed to liberation must reject the banking concept in its entirety... They must abandon the educational goal of deposit-making and replace it with the posing of the problems of human beings in their relation to the world” (p. 60). What Freire is suggesting is a notion that also existed, probably unknown to Freire, in te ao Māori: ‘Ako’. Ako³⁰ is a reciprocal relationship between teacher and student, which recognises that the teacher can also be a student and that the student can also be a teacher; a more democratic relationship than the normative-hierarchical teaching and learning relationship still prevalent in some New Zealand schools. Freire’s alternative paradigm imagines that

Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the-students-of-the-teacher
cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with student-teacher.
The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself
taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach.
They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow (p. 61).

Arts-based researcher Joe Norris (2019) also shares Freire’s ambition to emancipate and democratise the classroom, but through drama and theatre. What makes his research and practice innovative is “that our practices of inquiry simultaneously embrace a pedagogical

³⁰ maoridictionary.co.nz

stance of reciprocal learning. Researchers *and* participants come to regards themselves as learners and together enter each inquiry with the anticipation of new learning to emerge from the activities” (p. 104). Norris aims for “creative reciprocity of engagement” in his work with young people (p. 105).

If Freire proposed a revolutionary realignment of the relationship between student, teacher and society, then, in turn, Boal (1974) proposed an equally radical realignment between actor and audience, between performance object and a newly designed manner of reception: “theater can be a weapon for liberation... Change is imperative” (Foreword). Boal’s theory and practice suggest that the “spectator no longer delegates power to the characters either to think or to act in his place. The spectator frees himself; he thinks and acts for himself! Theater is action!” (p. 154). Through his invention of the “Spect-actor”, Boal found a form or mode for an audience member to be both receptor of the arguments of a piece of drama and to be a participant, enabling an audience to shape an argument in real time. This was most notable in his execution of “Forum Theatre”, where the “spectators intervene directly in the dramatic action and act” (p. 126). Boal rejected the notion that theatre is “pure contemplation”, aimed at bringing about catharsis in the viewer, but rather proposes that theatre should present a “vision of the world in transformation” (Introduction).

Maybe the theater in itself is not revolutionary, but these theatrical forms are without a doubt a rehearsal of revolution. The truth of the matter is that the spectator-actor practices a real act even though he does it in a fictional manner...

Within its fictitious limits, the experience is a concrete one (Boal, 1974, p. 141).

Boal recognised that the democratisation of the dramatic event was, as with Freire, to be found in the dialogic relationship between two engaged parties. For Freire this was to be found in a new architecture of teacher and student; for Boal this was to be found in the new positive tensions between dramatic discourse and audiences.

3.7. Embodied, somatic, and aestheticized learning

One of the fundamentally unique experiences for students of drama, as opposed to any other curriculum subject, is the embodied experience of the aesthetic journey. For the student actor, the aesthetic “is conceived of as a kind of knowing, one that is connected to the feelings, senses and emotions” and “refers to feeling and/or perceiving through the senses” (Cody, 2013, p.14). It “identifies the body as knower, as doer and as a medium of aesthetic expression” (Osmond, 2007). The aesthetic experience for the actor is realised in the *physical*

experience of the work (Jackson, 2005), and includes the “mode of sensuous knowing” (Abbs, 1987, p. 85), connecting with the individual at a fundamental level, or somatically. Somatic connection implies that the individual feels, or experiences the event, at the cellular level of their body; this is no abstract pursuit or objective experience. Acting in role can amount to a performative enquiry, which “recognizes that we know the world through all our senses, through our bodies, and that we can sometimes better represent that knowledge through our bodies rather than through what comes from our mind alone” (O’Connor & Anderson, 2015, p. 26). A rational and reasoned response is surpassed by the embodied and sensed. For Bolton (1984) “aesthetic meanings are felt rather than comprehended. The universal meanings... are ‘embodied’ within the action” (p. 147).

Bishop (2006) cites Berman who describes “somatic” or “bodily” knowing, a reference to “an embodied way of being and of a knowing that is a nonaccountable, nondescribable” (p. 118). For Alexander (2006), the power of “performance ethnography resides in the emphatic and embodied engagement of other ways of knowing that heightens the possibility of acting upon the humanistic impulse to transform the world” (p. 412). O’Toole (2006) cites “scholars like biologist Maturana (1987), anthropologist Gregory Bateson (1989) and systems theorist Fritjof Capra (1996)” each of whom “validates the idea that we know through our body, our feelings or senses, and our social instincts, and not simply our intelligence, and that we are not always fully conscious of this embodied knowing” (p. 30).

Bishop (2006), takes the nature of somatic engagement beyond the normative realm of the actor and aesthete, describing how a researcher can respond or be positioned somatically, by which he “means to be involved bodily – that is, physically, ethically, morally, and spiritually, not just in one’s capacity as a ‘researcher’ concerned with methodology” (p. 130). O’Farrell (2009) discusses the “potential of singing to foster intercultural understanding” (p. 1), but in this act I recognise that singing is itself somatic: an internal physical-mechanical, deeply personal process of art making, resulting in a product that is formed of air, bone and tissue. Fels (1998) suggests that “Our tools of inquiry are our bodies, our minds, our imaginations, our experiences, our feelings, our memories, our biases, our judgements and prejudgements, our hopes and our desires – simply, our very being, becoming” (p. 29). Norris et al (2019) proposes that researchers need to be “‘present’ in our practice”, which “means being fully aware and engaged in the moment”, physically, spiritually, emotionally and somatically. Norris continues, “The ability to surrender to the moment, and to give yourself

to what unfolds as a result of the work that is taking place, means that you are attending to the pulse of your practice” (p. 103).

Chapter Four: The Technical Box – Methodology

4.1 Research question

This chapter details the methodology of this study. The research question that focuses this study is:

How can a drama teacher develop new dramatic-performative work that engages teacher, student and community with the aesthetic, develops social curiosity, at the same time that it meets curriculum goals?

The research found in this thesis, and through the three projects, is represented as two layers, or described in two forms:

- each production is itself an investigation into the play that was performed: coming to understand the importance of process and its relationship to product(ion); the unpacking of text(s) and creation of potential meaning(s) to the director, to the actors and to its audiences; finding ways of fulfilling those meanings and executing an allied intention, which are both exciting and consequential. The overarching paradigm of arts-based research is useful in examining such work;
- in addition, this study explores my evolving awareness and criticality of my teacher-director practice, in a school context. Reflective practice provides a framework for this investigation.

The processes undertaken in these projects/productions are detailed in chapters 5-7.

The two layers or two forms I describe are not entirely separate: in this chapter I do, to some extent, discuss the layers/forms separately, however, in practice the two were merged or blended. They will also merge and blend in my discussion. Ongoing reflection is an integral part of the workshop-rehearsal-production processes. As I engaged with these processes, I placed myself into a conscious state of regular critical reflection.

The nature of my role, as teacher of an arts subject (and as a director in a school context), is shown to be complex, as I constantly engage with both the content and the aesthetic of what we do during workshop, rehearsal and production processes, and with the way that I as teacher/director facilitate and shape dramatic work with students and collaborators. In my role as an arts-educator, I share my passion for creative artefacts and the power of the aesthetic to shape dramatic work and respond to work with the young adults who choose to take my class or become involved in production(s). In my role as a teacher-practitioner, I

model a way to respond to the world and its complexity through artmaking. This can be found in both the processes (that are an experience in themselves) and in the art products. Each art product results from and stands for that process, and is situated in time, place, reflecting ambition, oftentimes responding to tension. I consider the young adult standing in front of me as the subject of the inquiry; all artistic-creative-aesthetic work is mediated through his or her intellect and body, through his or her experiences, biases, emergent understandings, confusion, and questions about a complex world. Often, a dynamic teaching moment in a class will eventuate because the tributaries of numerous disparate yet interconnected waters of classroom practice overlap and merge, creating powerful currents of new thinking or potent challenge. Thus, a seemingly anodyne class conversation about the state of Māori migration in the 1960s in Aotearoa New Zealand might merge with a challenging conversation about contemporary Chinese migration today, Huawei, and emergent racist traits of students, who are practising underdeveloped social and political positions, and formulating moral, ethical and social codes. Such discussion, debate and dissension might then lead to the creation of a dramatic scene, either founded textually in spoken word, or in theatrical action that has semiotic meaning. At the same time, the various curricula my work is predicated upon are calling out, asking me as a teacher to found an educational experience on expected norms: to assess – both formatively and summatively – and to underpin creative work using an agreed vernacular of drama, theatre and performance. The character, content and context of my work and its complexity are reflected in what Geertz (1973) describes as confronting a researcher (in his case an ethnographer):

What the ethnographer is in fact faced with... is a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another, which are at once strange, irregular, and inexplicit, and which he must contrive somehow first to grasp and then to render (p. 10).

In my role as an arts teacher-practitioner, I am located securely within my school drama community: observing, analysing, notating, engaging and creating pedagogic and creative work based upon my growing understanding of students' developing culture, customs and habits. Part of my role is to try "to rescue the 'said' of such discourse from its perishing occasions and fix it in perusable terms" (Geertz, 1973, p. 20). The "perusable terms" are for me the aesthetic-creative processes and drama-theatre products that eventuate from my work with student-aesthetes. Because of the overlapping of "complex conceptual structures" (Geertz, 1973, p. 10), I embrace Greenwood's notion of the "non-normative, fluid and multi-

faceted approach to the aesthetic, acknowledging it as a complex (rather than complicated) and dynamic concept” (Greenwood, 2018, p. 2).

With respect to the complexity of reflection, observation, reflection and action, in my three chapters – that detail the processes and products executed for *The Pohutukawa Tree*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *YouthQuake* – I describe in detail the research as “knotted” narratives (Geertz, 1973, p. 10). Here, I write about the exploration of the aesthetic, the lived action of teacher/teaching, the changing positionality of the student, and the numerous processes and their resultant products, which interplay but remain unseparated, in a unified narrative.

4.2 Qualitative

In very broad terms my approach to the work undertaken in this thesis is qualitative and is formed as a case study, in which myself and my practice – especially reflection that leads to refined/changed practice – is the focus of the study. It’s interested in the carefully considered detail of how and why my teaching, and the collaborative production work, took place, as well as how creative-aesthetic approaches allow for meaning-making to occur, to be situated, and understood, as well as the defining of concepts, and the analysis of transient data such as metaphors, semiotics and description (Berg, 2012).

Drawing upon researchers such as Denzin and Lincoln (2005) and others, this qualitative research also aims at “decolonising research” and aims to transform “the institutions of research, the deep underlying structures and taken-for-granted ways of organising, conducting, and disseminating research and knowledge” (p. 88). Qualitative research requires that researchers, such as myself, working in a bi- and/or multi-cultural space to “be more than either travellers or cultural tourists”, and instead use research as a tool “to create spaces for dialogue across difference; to analyze and make sense of complex and shifting experiences, identities, and realities” (p. 103). For Alexander (2005), it requires that the researcher recognise that the activity of research is situated, and

locates the participants, researchers, and observers in the world – a world in which the implications and complications of being and knowing others can be negotiated in mutually beneficial ways. It consists of a set of interpretive material practices that make culture visible; hence making manifest not only the cultural conditions of living, but also the joint concerns of humanism that can be equally distributed (p. 417).

Finley (2005), describes how in the past qualitative researchers had “embraced new practices that redefined the roles of researchers and research participants-who no longer were subjects but instead were collaborators or even coresearchers-so that the lines between the researcher and the researched blurred” (p. 682). This is an aspiration of the work written up in this thesis also and is intrinsic to my methodology. Gabnai, writing in Donelan & O’Toole (1996), states that “drama, its process more than its product, is the best way to learn how to experience our encounters qualitatively. Personally, drama teaches me to ask and to listen – to pay attention” (p. 97). For Sallis et al (2018) what “qualitative research frames best” is

the unknown, layers and complexity, and contradiction that often arises in listening to what folks have to say about their lives... to trust in the process of creating art in order to understand that which I could not understand any other way (p. 243).

In contemporary practice, researchers such as Sajani (2019) have recognised a need for the practitioner to recognise and embrace complexity and adaptability, in the way we “balance the aesthetic and social goals”, which leads to complex, multifaceted productions that “can have educational, pedagogical, historical, political, emancipatory, and/or even commercial value” (p. 83).

As a qualitative researcher, I must also recognise that the educational culture within which I am situated is rapidly changing around me, and I need to respond to these changes: in curricula, demography, and world events that impact classroom discourses. As Schön (1983), citing Brooks (1967), commented, the contemporary professional must possess an “unprecedented requirement for adaptability” (p. 15):

The dilemma of the professional today lies in the fact that both ends of the gap he is expected to bridge with his profession are changing so rapidly: the body of knowledge that he must use and the expectations of society that he must serve... professions-medicine, engineering, business management and education-must bear the brunt of responsibility for generating and managing this change. This places on the professional a requirement for adaptability that is unprecedented (Brooks, in Schön, 1983, p. 15).

4.3 Arts-based research

As Greenwood asserts, art-based research is a widely applied term that

encompasses a range of research approaches and strategies that utilize one or more of the arts in investigation. Such approaches have evolved from understandings that life and experiences of the world are multifaceted, and that art offers ways of knowing the world that involve sensory perceptions and emotion as well as intellectual responses. Researchers have used arts for various stages of research. It may be to collect or create data, to interpret or analyze it, to present their findings, or some combination of these. Sometimes arts-based research is used to investigate art making or teaching in or through the arts (Greenwood, 2019).

In the three projects (both the processes and final productions), discussed in the following chapters (5-7), the three aspects suggested by Greenwood – collect/create data; interpret/analyse; present findings – were involved. A modest example of each follows, but are unpacked more fully in the relevant chapters:

- Collect/create data: the processes in Project #1, *The Pohutukawa Tree*, involved a guided questionnaire, undertaken with students. This questionnaire (Appendix B) allowed students to reflect on their positionality and current/shifting identity. The data generated in this questionnaire also allowed for discussion, debate and dramatic improvisation that eventuated in the creation of new data. This data led to new scenes (Appendix C) being written for a newly imagined version of the play – either Act 1, or Act 2/3 – which was then rehearsed and performed to an invited audience.
- Interpret/analyse: the processes in Project #2, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, included discussion and improvisation with the students and Māori creative consultants. This was focused especially around the performative aspects of both te ao Māori and tikanga Māori. Such discussion and improvisation allowed for reflection on the work, and this reflection led to interpretation and analysis of the data produced. Through this process, performative acts were imagined, discussed, devised, workshopped, rehearsed and finally executed in front of an audience. A notable example of this process is the invention of Māori tikanga seen during the final blessing of the royal couples, at the play's conclusion: "With this field dew consecrate" (V/1/409).
- Present findings: Project #3, *YouthQuake*, utilised both a performance ethnography and verbatim theatre approach, during the theatre making process. Lengthy interviews, along with further discussions and debates, created data that was based upon, and revealed, unique collective and individual student experience. These

experiences, shaped as drama, theatre and performative action, were then shared back to an audience, made up of the school and wider community that these students came from. The production of *YouthQuake* concluded each night with a structured debate, in which the audience were invited to comment upon the play (and research data) they had been engaged with, generating new data and allowing the audience to present their findings on what had just been presented before them.

It is important to point out that the exploration that was undertaken by researcher, students and collaborators, in Projects #1, #2 and #3, was not always rational or cognitive. Instead, some impactful moments were borne of intuitive, instinctive responses, by teacher and collaborators, during the rehearsal processes, and were seen through the action and body of a student-actor rather than a rational articulation. In this research, and in these projects, there is exploration and investigation through feeling, sensing, physicalising a performative idea without necessarily the need for coherent thinking. I attempt to capture this by using a narrative approach, rather than purely analytical or thematic description, in the three relevant chapters (5-7). However, there were many conversations and moments of collaboration that drew upon participants' conscious cognitive participation.

One arts-based approach that would allow for students to examine their context, utilising their thinking, whilst revealing their ambitions and fears, was a use of both verbatim theatre and performance ethnography. This was during Project #3, *YouthQuake*. In this project, students were to become an intimate part of the dramatic process(es) and products, using their own words, recorded (with permission) by me or shared through interviews, with myself and collaborators. "For Denzin, performance ethnography is 'literally the staged reenactment of the ethnographically derived notes'" (Ackroyd & O'Toole, 2010, p. 26), and for Garoian (1999) "performance ethnography helps in establishing a critical site, an instance in which embodied experience meets social and theoretical knowing to establish a critical dialogue between researcher-performers and observers" (p. 67).

Duffy et al (2019) assert that in "thinking and practice" the practitioner needs to embrace the complexity inherent in following "where participants led", which is one of three crucial lessons learned by these practitioners. Secondly, it is important "to surrender to what qualitative research frames best: the unknown, layers and complexity, and contradiction that often arises in listening to what folks have to say about their lives." The final "third lesson

was to trust in the process of creating art in order to understand that which I could not understand any other way” (p. 243). These are learnings that underpin my methodology.

In the final analysis, arts-based researchers are practitioners who think of themselves as artists first and foremost: “I like to think of arts-based researchers as artist-researchers, and I purposely privilege the artist first in that hyphenated identity” (ibid, p. 87).

4.4 Reflective practice

My reflective practice during this research was made up of three parts. Firstly, during the process of research and creation, I engaged in “reflection-in-action”, which Schön (1983) differentiates from (the second part of) “reflection-on-action”. Reflection-on-action began prior to this thesis and research, when I recognised my dissatisfaction with the working processes and products that I was currently engaged in, as a teacher and theatre maker. This dissatisfaction led to my ambition to change how and what I teach and make. During the processes of teaching and making, as well as reviewing the products, I also experienced moments of reflection-in-action, where I considered the implications of my choices as part of the process of aesthetic-creative work. The third and final part of my reflective practice was reflecting on both the ‘in’ and ‘on’ from the vantage point of having finished the three projects and examining the aesthetic processes I had developed and new drama/theatre products that had eventuated.

My reflective practice was prompted by a dissatisfaction with my current processes which “attracted my attention”, my frustration at my creative inertia provoking “a new way of perceiving or thinking about the professional situation of practice” (Russell, 2005, p. 200). In retrospect, my realisation led to me taking a “novel course of action”, by amending my pedagogical-creative thinking and activity, and allowing for a new perspective. Reflection allowed me to “formalize my thoughts and opinions based on my experiences” (Russell, 2005, p. 201), assessing my “major strengths” and my “challenges”, leading me to consider positive change (Russell, 2005, p. 202). The substance and nature of my reflections, and their impact on process and product, are articulated in the narratives of each of the three projects (#1, #2 and #3), their progress as well as insights in the following chapters.

Reflection led me to consider the nature and quality of the “collaboration between ethnographer and community”, between myself as teacher/theatre maker and my student community, as well as staff and the wider community in which my school sits. I recognised that a collaboration should result in “Working towards building community identity”

(Ackroyd & O'Toole, 2010, p. 21), and that undertaking more formal arts-based research and performative enquiry might be a positive way forward, allowing a collaboration predicated in part upon a sincere open-mindedness, listening “to the ideas of children in a new way, with respect, with curiosity, with openness, a willingness to wonder and welcome” (Fels, 2012, p. 51). Reflecting further, I recognised that a logical and creative response to my pedagogical and creative inertia, would be to utilise elements of verbatim drama and theatre, where the “words of real people are recorded or transcribed by a dramatist during an interview or a research process” which are then “edited, arranged, or recontextualised to form a dramatic presentation” (Hammond & Steward, 2008, p. 9). The overlap and interplay between these three approaches (performance ethnography, arts-based research, and verbatim drama/theatre), is seen in Project #1 to #3.

As an aid to the reflective practice, a journal was kept during the process, in which either written or audio entries were made, which were logged and revisited at irregular junctures.

4.5 Entering the field

Entering the field did not require going to a new place to undertake research. However, it did require a negotiation around how to, and permission for, research in this context. It is important to outline my teaching context and classroom in this section.

Although the arts and culture are championed by the school's senior leadership, the facilities and resources that I work within and with are limited. The drama department has six staff and yet we have only one purpose-built drama studio; any further second or third drama class, timetabled when the drama studio is in use, must be undertaken in a non-specialised drama space, somewhere on campus. For larger school productions the school does have a large theatre space, called the Auditorium, most regularly used for whole-school assemblies, on a Monday and Friday, where 2,500 students and staff gather. Due to its size and dimensions, the Auditorium must be carefully repurposed with scaffolded seating brought into reshape a performance space appropriate to the need of each production, whether that be end-on, traverse or thrust configuration (see Figure 40, p. 193).

The students in my care, who are a major focus of this study, it should be noted are changing from drama students as developing young adults, to drama students as emerging artists and research partners, and myself from teacher/director, to researcher/collaborator and facilitator, enabling students to find their artistry, agency and voice, and my research into how this process was enabled. Therefore, there is a change in the normative relationship(s) between

teacher and student, which the students may not care about; however, it carries some ethical responsibilities. In this new context, and through the projects, the students are being researched and invited to be researchers. They are invited to be open to discussion on personal matters, to be more reflective than normal, whilst also knowing that some of the conversations that are undertaken will be written up: either as scenes for a dramatic performance, or in the thesis proper. Under these circumstances, the students' opinions, positions, epiphanies and reflections (as well as their potential failures) are up for scrutiny, and here in this thesis these are discussed. Furthermore, the discussion of cultural locatedness is also up for discussion and analysis, but neither came up for discussion in the boundaries of the formal ethical approval required by the university. Finally, during this process, as I entered the role of the researcher, I had to remind myself that my primary responsibility was also to remain a good teacher during the process. As a teacher, I have two mantras or aphorisms that guide my practice: first is 'duty of care' and that this is preeminent in all engagements with my students. Second is 'teach the class as though your child is in it', which I find extremely useful, especially during a challenging student interaction.

When reflecting on my ethical responsibilities, I am reminded of Richard Sallis' experience (2019) with a school age student who wanted to come out to his father during a staged piece of performance ethnography, performed in a school setting. Sallis discusses the multiple dilemmas of creating a workshop and rehearsal context in which students "can feel safe in the environment" which "may lead to them letting their guard down more so than they might do in other aspects of their life (in or out of school)" (p. 38). Whilst positively creating such contexts, Sallis admitted to feeling

conflicted at such times because whilst I am grateful and respectful that an informant can feel so at ease with me that they enter into this deeper level of disclosure, I feel the need to bracket off what I have been told because it goes beyond the objectives of the research project (Sallis, 2019, p. 38-39).

As I researched, I too felt that "interviewing research participants can pose ethical dilemmas" as I knew that these same students would, to a lesser or greater degree in each project, "recreate their own personal experiences on stage" for a paying audience (p. 39). This audience, not privy to the workshop-rehearsal processes undertaken nor the ambition of the participants, might be thinking that they were attending a typical-normative school production. Such a disconnect between student material and audience expectation could

potentially place the student in harm's way. To bridge the gap, between expectation and potential harm, each production was advertised in the school community quite carefully. An outline of the processes and performance material that would be experienced by an audience was made clear, and cast members were also encouraged to communicate to friends and whānau who might attend. Such statements were written carefully so as to not spoil any potential impact of the theatre event.

4.6 Ethics approval

In addition to the ethical considerations discussed above, ethics approval for this thesis was sought from the University of Canterbury and granted. Participants (students, staff and collaborators) had the research process(es) thoroughly outlined to them, in all its facets, and it was explained that participation was purely voluntary. Furthermore, participants were told that even if they agreed to be involved that they could withdraw from the research at any point during the process. Participants involved in research that led to a public production (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*; *YouthQuake*) could not be promised full anonymity due to the public nature of such performances, as audiences would see and recognise participants in a production. However, participants were told that they did not have to be involved in the research that led to a production but could just appear in the production if they wished. Pseudonyms were given to all participants engaged in this research. Participants also had it explained that any images or text that were of or by the participant would be returned for approval and/or amended where necessary. Approval for any photographic images was sought from the participants, and these same photographs have been allowed to be included in the thesis with the kind permission of the photographer.

A copy of the ethics approval form is attached in Appendix A.

4.7 The material (data)

The production material that forms the basis of this study consists of three distinct yet interconnected research projects, each focused on creating and reflecting on artistic-creative-aesthetic processes and products. Project #1 is concerned with classroom practice (see Table 7), using an inward facing lens to approach a widely respected New Zealand playtext – *The Pohutukawa Tree* – as its stimulus. Project #2 – *A Midsummer Night's Dream* – builds upon the bicultural understandings begun in Project #1, however, this process and product has an outward facing lens, as it allows rehearsal work to be shared with a public audience drawn from the wider school community. Project #3 – *YouthQuake* – takes the bicultural voice and

position examined in Project #2, and adds to it a multicultural and pluralist colour, building upon the modest verbatim and performance ethnography qualities of the workshop/rehearsal processes and final aesthetic product.

The three projects are summed up in the table that follows (Figure 7), which details their dates, dramatic nature, participants, and where the description is in this thesis. As I have stated previously, although I am looking at separate elements of my process, practice and the nature of the students' engagement, I am presenting the resultant data as a knotted, unified narrative, which I will explain further in latter sections of this thesis. This unified narrative is shared across three distinct yet interconnected projects, which can be found in three chapters in the thesis.

Project #	Date of work	In-class or Public	Original or Devised Text or Performative Action	Boys'/Girls' School	Chapter & Page No.
1. <i>"The Pohutukawa Tree"</i> , by B. Mason	2015 to current day	In-class performances	50/50 original text & devised text & performative action	Boys' School	Chapter 5 P. 72
2. <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> , by W. Shakespeare	July 2016	Public Performances	70% original text plus devised te reo & tikanga performative action	Both Boys' & Girls' schools	Chapter 6 P. 119
3. <i>YouthQuake</i> , by N. Brown & 'Mary', & students	July 2018	Public Performances	100% original, based upon interviews and verbatim texts	Both Boys' and Girls' schools	Chapter 7 P. 173

Figure 7. The three narratives of this thesis

My data also includes formal interviews with students, collaborators, and staff, and the transcriptions of these interviews can be found in Appendices E, F, G and H.

A further part of the material/data comes from my reflective journal. During my time working on the projects and thesis, I kept a journal – sometimes written, sometimes audio recorded – that allowed me to reflect on my current progress and pose questions based on recent experiences. An example of such would be one entry, which came after my Colloquium exam, focused on a conversation between myself and my primary supervisor. In this written entry, I detail the benefits of repeating the process to my teaching colleagues at my school, which I did undertake. However, this seemingly unremarkable reflective journal

entry did have an enormous impact on my thesis and project, as during the repeated Colloquium I was challenged by a school staff member from the languages department. This teacher, whilst recognising the power of the bicultural work on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, wondered aloud: 'Nick, although I recognise the quality of the work and how it speaks to and for tangata whenua and biculturalism, where – may I ask – is the voice of Asian New Zealand?' (Chapter 7, p. 176). This question, which I wrote up in my journal the same day that it occurred, precipitated a sustained period of reflection, which in turn became the antecedents to *YouthQuake*, in which the student voices of Asian New Zealand were keenly expressed.

4.8 Participants

The student, teacher and audience participants named in the thesis are outlined in Figure 8. In *The Pohutukawa Tree* project there were (and continue to be) on average 25+ student participants; in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* there were 71 student participants, one kaumatua (cultural advisor), one teacher-collaborator and one external mentor; in *YouthQuake* there were 70 student participants, one teacher collaborator and various audience respondents.

While people gave and were willing to have their names used, I respect that the students were under 18 years-of-age and might change their position as adults, and so I have given them pseudonyms to maintain their anonymity. I have also given pseudonyms to adult participants to be consistent across the thesis.

In regards of demography, currently 50% of our student population were born overseas. Our drama and theatre community is richly multicultural and pluralist, reflecting the character of Auckland and the North Shore. The demography of the school is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2.

	Pseudonym	Year	Production	Male/Female	Ethnicity
Student	Student H	2015	...Tree ³¹	Male	Pākehā
	Student T	2015	...Tree	Male	Pākehā
	Student U	2015	...Tree	Male	Pākehā
	Student M	2015	...Tree	Male	Pākehā
	Student D	2015	...Tree	Male	Pākehā
	Student B	2015	...Tree	Male	Pākehā
	Student H	2016	...Dream	Male	Pākehā
	Student A	2016	...Dream	Male	Asian NZ
	Student AK	2016	...Dream	Male	Pākehā
	Student E	2016	...Dream	Female	Pākehā
	Student W	2016	...Dream	Male	Pākehā
	Student M	2016	...Dream	Female	Māori
	Student GA	2016	...Dream	Female	Māori
	Student 1	2016	...Dream	Male	Māori
	Student 2	2016	...Dream	Male	Māori
	Student DC	2018	YQ	Male	Asian NZ
	Student AS	2018	YQ	Female	Asian NZ
Teacher	Matua T	2016	...Dream	Male	Māori
	Mary	2016 2018	...Dream YQ	Female	Pākehā
	Vera	2016	...Dream	Female	Māori
	Matua JW	2016	...Dream	Male	Māori
	BS	2016	...Dream	Female	Asian NZ
	HN	2016	...Dream	Female	Asian NZ
	Dr H	2017	YQ	Female	Asian NZ
Audience	Mother	2018	YQ	Female	Pākehā
	12-year-old	2018	YQ	Female	Pākehā
	Chinese exchange student	2018	YQ	Male	Chinese
	MoE Staffer	2018	YQ	Female	Pākehā

Figure 8. A table of participants

³¹ ...Tree is *The Pohutukawa Tree*; ...Dream is *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; YQ is *YouthQuake*.

4.9 Analysis

My analysis and interpretation of the data utilises three lenses implicit in the research question: ‘aesthetics’, ‘social curiosity’ and ‘curriculum’ (which includes student learning). Furthermore, I also examine how, as a teacher, my growing awareness of what it means to teach with a new focus impacted my practice and student experience, and how this resulted in profound new departures for me, such as the new rehearsal paradigm I have developed and begun implementing in all my work, to a lesser or greater extent (Chapter 5, p. 72).

My data is made up of three key areas:

- The aesthetic-creative process(es) and product(s) undertaken in the three projects – *The Pohutukawa Tree*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *YouthQuake*.
- The voice of my student and adult participants, and their emergent/changing understandings of self, place, aesthetic, curiosity and agency.
- My record of my emergent/changing understandings of teaching, learning, self, place, aesthetic, curriculum and enabling student agency and autonomy.

The analysis of data is written up in the chapters that follow (5-7), within the knotted, unified narratives. This is because the data that was generated cannot be easily separated into manageable chunks or homogenous units of understanding; to do so would reduce them and minimise a profound and creative interplay between aspects of the research. Furthermore, the research thinking and physical activity that led to the data/built upon the data was complex and far from monolithic. As I led the projects, I did not examine curriculum on one day, aesthetics on the following, social curiosity at a weekend rehearsal. The needs of a rehearsal methodology requires that all were approached simultaneously, flowing together, which is why I wrote my finding as unified narratives in the chapters.

The analysis is both qualitative and interpretive. There is a cumulative and emergent process which is developmental, provoking questions, challenges and possibilities, as I move from one process/production to the next. The process of working on each aesthetic-dramatic-theatrical project was not only the creation of each work, but a recognition of the emergent possibilities for future approaches to creating similar work. For example: the creative work undertaken on *The Pohutukawa Tree* became – through the process of its devising, workshopping and rehearsing – a stimulus and launchpad for the work that eventuated on *A*

Midsummer Night's Dream. The final production and response to this process then in turn provoked the ideas and process that in time became the play, *YouthQuake*.

To unpack this further, it is important to reflect that during the in-class processes experienced in *The Pohutukawa Tree* project (#1), it was apparent that the conversations and debates taking place between students and drama department staff around biculturalism and multiculturalism (through the process of questioning, exercises, workshopping and rehearsal) were impactful in the lives of those involved. However, these conversations were not being had across the whole school, by its staff and students. Enabling a further perspective on this issue was that, although I was relatively new to my school, I had also taken on the role as Māori Dean, and I recognised that a production might act as an opportunity to advance conversations around biculturalism and multiculturalism. In the role of Māori Dean, I also wanted to respectfully challenge the School's Strategic Plan #2, which aims to promote biculturalism but in a multicultural context. A concern was whether this was reflective of the expectations of the Treaty of Waitangi, one of our founding documents as a nation. Therefore, a relevant production could be an opportunity to explore these questions at a wider school level, engaging both students and staff. The school had a need to explore these issues as a school, just as I was working on them in my classroom, and therefore an appropriately conceived production seemed appropriate.

Fortunately, during the workshopping and rehearsal processes for each production, I worked with a teaching colleague, Mary, from our sister school. Mary worked in the role of an assistant director during Project #2 *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and as a co-writer/director for Project #3 *YouthQuake*. What this enabled was a shared space to discuss the nature and function of process, why specific choices were made, and student positionality, voice and agency.

As each process and product was worked through, there was an ongoing cycle of interpretation and analysis, impacting future decisions on each project, reflecting the process of participatory action research (Freire, 1970). Furthermore, feedback from staff, participants and audiences was invited and given, which prompted further reflection and analysis. For example, the process/product of Project #3 was rendered in such a way as to create a forum for audience participation at the end of the play. This was to allow the audience to reflect upon and analyse their own understanding of what had been shared, by comparing it to the responses of other audience members.

In addition, this thesis also reports my ongoing reflective analysis of my practice, where, as a reflective practitioner, I sought to regularly and critically analyse the extent to which I was meeting my three-fold goal. These goals, as found in the research question, focused on developing new dramatic-performative work that engages teacher, student and community with the aesthetic, develops social curiosity, while it meets curriculum goals. Within this analysis was a need to differentiate data that emerged from my work as a. the teacher and b. the director, as these two roles were intimately interlinked during the processes in the classroom and in the rehearsal room.

4.10 Presentation

An ambition in the way that this thesis has been written, is to have in its design a sense of art, drama and theatre making. The following examples illustrate this idea:

- First, I have used the vernacular and imagery of drama and theatre to shape titles for each chapter of the thesis. For example, this chapter is called The Technical box: Methodology. I have chosen the metaphor of the Technical Box as it speaks to the idea of the teacher-director sitting within the ‘control’ of a theatre production, and from this position giving advice on the technical action of the stage – the lighting, sound design and stage technology – and how it is coordinated to augment the aesthetic. It is through the methodical application of these technical elements that the production is brought to life.
- Second, within each of narratives (chapters 5-7) numerous visual images have been included. Each captures a key moment, either in the process or in the production, which was an impactful moment of creativity, reflective practice and/or pedagogy.
- Third and finally, each chapter is introduced via a brief vignette, in play form, of myself in a reflective moment. Each moment has been chosen as it reveals a provocation or epiphany related to my practice, its development, and/or its need to positively change. Each reflection, provocation or epiphany helped shape the decision making and direction of each of the projects.

4.11 Issues of trustworthiness and reliability

As a teacher-practitioner new to research, I am conscious of how such a personal and subjective series of projects might claim to possess both trustworthiness and reliability. The trustworthiness of this account can be viewed in very subjective terms: it is my practice and it is bounded by the context that I work in. Trustworthiness could also be viewed in terms of whether it resonates with the challenges and discoveries faced by other teachers in similar

contexts. While this thesis is a very personal journey of exploring my practice as a teacher, and the work I undertake with my students (in, and outside the classroom), the processes and product(s) are perhaps not substantively so very different to what other teachers might do in their schools and classes, in different regions of Aotearoa New Zealand (and maybe around the world), where drama is taught as a curriculum subject. Its reliability may be found in similar work, or in the possibility of teachers replicating my processes in their contexts and finding success of their own, with their specific community.

Within this acknowledged subjectivity I have sought to be conscientious about recording the creative work that was undertaken, the spoken and written responses of student participants, creative collaborators and audiences, and my own critical reflection on the work, both during the process(es) and after the final production(s). Each was done to provide evidence of trustworthiness and reliability.

Beyond this, I hope that my work might serve as a stimulus and/or provocation for readers to find resonances or dissonances in their own goals and practices, whether they work within the teaching profession or without.

In the final analysis, the arts-based, reflective process of this research has forced me to look at my own practice, as a teacher-practitioner, more than I would have done if I had continued in my current creative-pedagogical mode. Examining practice through the lens of a practice-based study and thesis has enabled me to recognise my failings and action new creative-pedagogical initiatives that has positively changed my practice.

Chapter 5: In a Black Box Studio, Playing with Ideas

“The Office”

The office was warm and sticky – it had been a hot day, and the air-conditioning failed shortly after morning tea. Other deans were going about their tasks, meeting with students, calling parents, sharing concerns with colleagues. I was engaged on my computer: glasses on, head down, focused intently upon my task. Then a gentle rap on the door came.

“Kia ora, matua?” spoke the voice.

“Ae, who’s there?” I replied.

“Ae, it’s me, sir.”

A young Māori student, Year 11, stood in the door frame. Clearly nervous, out of place, but keen to engage.

“Kia ora. How can I help?” I offered.

“Err, about yesterday... I just wanted to say...” He faltered and looked down.

“It’s all good; go on.” I encouraged.

“Err, about yesterday... The way I reacted to you... It was wrong; I feel bad.” He revealed.

“No worries. Do you want to come in, and we can chat?” I suggested.

Taking me up on the offer he entered the office of the Māori Dean and sat down. He gazed around the office; the quality of his looking told me that he had not been in it before. The day before I had engaged Māori students in a questionnaire that was to be used in a new Māori Education Plan³², which I was putting together for the school board, the senior leadership team and staff. I wanted to capture a little of what it ‘felt’ to be Māori at this particular school. To do so I had formulated various questions to unpick this specific concern.

“When I spoke to you, the way that I spoke to you... You know, it was rude... I am sorry,” he said.

“Thanks, I appreciate you saying that, and I accept your apology. For my part, I apologise if my questions made you feel uncomfortable.”

³² See Appendix D.

At this, the student nodded.

“They did, the questions did, sir, but not for the reasons you may imagine. Since my parents got divorced, I have become disconnected from my koro³³ and he was my access to my sense of being Māori. He took me to the marae, he taught me things about te ao Māori that I enjoyed; but I was only just beginning that journey. Without him I feel awkward claiming a place as Māori, being seen as Māori.”

The boy spoke with directness and respect, but now he paused.

“When you are...” he continued. “...When you are Māori, or discussed, or described, or nominated as Māori, then people start to look to you in a certain way. They think you will know all about Whina... err... Whina ...”

“Whina Cooper?” I interjected.

“Ae, Whina Cooper. About the land marches and the Waitangi Tribunal... What to do on a Marae, lead a karakia, speak the reo, you know.”

He paused, shame writ large upon his face and in his injured eyes.

“And I just don’t... I know some things, but less than most, even Pākehā boys in the kapa haka troupe. Jeez, it’s embarrassing; and so that’s why I reacted like I did. You asked me questions about something that I am not sure that I am. I felt a fraud!”

I rose and closed the door that had been left fractionally ajar when the boy entered. I paused by his chair, resting my hand on his shoulder momentarily as I returned to my seat.

“I know how you feel. I am the dean for Māori students, and I am Pākehā. Every day I hope that the students will trust in me, my judgment, my genuine concern for them, my passion and commitment to te ao Māori, tikanga and Maoritanga. I, like you, am on a journey; just because I am a teacher does not mean that I am not consumed with the same fears and guilt as a student might be. I am just able to hide them better.”

He smiled as he heard me joke.

³³ Grandfather.

“Again, I apologise for the questions and I apologise for not predicting the issue of dislocation that you have described. My job now is to use what you have told me to benefit you and other students.”

As we chatted further the student began to relax and laugh, and with his help I formulated new questions that would allow all Māori and non-Māori students a chance to engage in this discussion. As we chatted, I also realised that many of our non-Māori students felt a dislocation demonstrated by this Year 11. My role as dean gave way to my role as drama teacher, and I started to formulate an embryonic teaching idea to allow all students to question their current, or changing, or developing positionality as young New Zealanders. Such a teaching idea would need to allow students space to be open, authentic, agentic and free from judgement. I recognised that I needed to create a “Hopeful Openness” where a “performance creates a space in which participants not only glimpse who and what they are and desire but also come into contact with different identities, positions, and desires.” (Jones, 2006, p. 777).

5.1 The Pohutukawa Tree

During my time teaching in New Zealand (especially in my current Auckland context), in the role of both dean and teacher, I have become cognisant of a gap between my Year 11 students' current, specific needs and the way I approach teaching them, in style, form and content. My personal embracing of the other (a new version of myself; see the Context chapter) in a new country parallels what my Year 11 students have gone through and continue to go through as they mature. I reflected on what could be done to bridge this distance: how could I marry my developing New Zealand identity and pedagogy to my interests in the drama aesthetic, or my students' individual and collective needs to my obligation towards *The New Zealand Curriculum* and the drama Achievement Standards³⁴? How could I foster a balance between *play* and *achievement*; challenge C/cultural homogeneity in the face of C/cultural heterogeneity; challenge personal stasis with personal change? Year 11 students were chosen as these young men still have three years remaining at school, where support and counsel can be given to questions that arise from the project but are also mature enough to engage with the material and process involved.

Fortunately, at a Drama New Zealand Conference, I found myself in conversation with my friend and mentor, Janinka Greenwood. During a shared lunch we fell to talking about two things: my developing identity as a member of the New Zealand drama community, and the work of New Zealand playwright Bruce Mason. As we spoke, I realised that firstly, there was a clear and present relationship between my developing identity and aspects of Mason's dramatic writing; and secondly, that this relationship could be expanded in such a way as to benefit students in the classroom. Such a class-based experience might enable students to become more aware about biculturalism and pluralism, whilst also addressing the flux that they experienced as they navigated their developing notion of themselves as a person. For Cahnmann-Taylor & Souto-Manning such potential dramatic play and exercises "allow us to start to understand social reality and our roles in it. In doing so, we can start thinking about, rehearsing, and enacting different ways of acting, reacting and being" (2010, p. 61). This in turn helps students to navigate their shifting position in the world. Supplementary to this is that several students³⁵ in my classes are first- or second-generation migrants, with potentially multiple identities, predicated upon both their own and their parents' sense of place and

³⁴ There is some debate in Aotearoa New Zealand about the use of the Achievement Standards as a de facto curriculum, rather than as an assessment tool, as they are designed to be used.

³⁵ In this project and unit of work, N=24.

locatedness (www.stats.govt.nz; school data). I came to realise that I needed to create a course, a unit of drama work, that enabled students to be taught about and experience agency, which in turn would allow them to position themselves as they saw fit. Agency can be found and experienced through the "imaginative behaviours" of drama, as it is the only process "that articulates inventing, anticipating, recollecting, hypothesising, creating, musing and day-dreaming or any other mode of imagining through the medium of concrete action" (Bolton, 1984, p. 142). Agency allows for an opportunity for students to investigate their developing notion of who they are as 21st Century New Zealanders, by playing with, and within, their national and cultural identity. Crucially, this would be through performance, through a teacher-facilitated unit of teaching and learning, in which students learn "how to take action that makes the world a better place for the communities in which we coexist" (Cahnmann-Taylor & Souto-Manning, 2010, p. xiii), and is a consequence of embodied, performative learning.

In microcosm, what the dramatic-aesthetic-pedagogical work would involve (and ultimately look like) can be seen diagrammatically represented in Figure 12, on p. 110. The final aesthetic product would be a play, performed to an audience, partly based in Bruce Mason's original text of *The Pohutukawa Tree*, but also partly a new play, as revealed in new scenes generated from inquiry and exercises undertaken in a drama class. Working with Mason's text would enable students to play in a bicultural frame; the new scenes would allow the same students to explore their multiculturalism and its relationship to biculturalism. Questionnaires would be utilised to gain a sense of pre-process positionality and locatedness, as well as data to utilise in the drama class and exercises. A second questionnaire was then employed at the conclusion of the process to measure new learning (if any).

The students involved in the in-class *The Pohutukawa Tree* project are male Year 11 students³⁶, at a Decile 9 Auckland secondary school³⁷. These students are materially well off, but culturally under-nourished. Many of the responses to a pre-process questionnaire the students undertook revealed that these students saw themselves as mostly Kiwi or New Zealanders, even if born overseas, however, all recognised their tupuna and whakapapa, for example their Australian or South African ancestors. The students' responses betrayed a limited knowledge of issues facing Aotearoa New Zealand, with most responses to the

³⁶ Usually 15 or 16 years of age.

³⁷ School deciles indicate the extent the school draws their students from low socio-economic communities. The lower the school's decile, the more funding it receives.

questions about challenges facing New Zealand as being quite Pākehā-centric: ‘affordable housing’; ‘immigration’; and ‘climate change’. No student was concerned with the current state of relationships between te ao Pākehā and te ao Māori, and there was little concern for indigenous rights. Furthermore, when asked about what icons of New Zealand cultural life spring to mind, none came from te ao Māori or Maoritanga. Rather the students suggested the ‘bach’, ‘jandals’ and overwhelmingly ‘the All Blacks’. Student HP revealed he chose the New Zealand All Blacks as his icon of choice “because to me it represents a sense of community that is strong in New Zealand, with all of us striving for a common goal” (personal communication, September 16, 2015). His rationale epitomised why several students chose the All Blacks as they did.

This unit of dramatic enquiry with these Year 11 students, utilising *The Pohutukawa Tree*, needs to be seen in the scope of a larger ambition of the author, which is to investigate student and cultural identity through dramatic play. This first project (of three) differs from the second and third in that it is situated within a drama classroom, and the work uses an inward facing lens. The work, and its results, are private, and to be shared with a restricted audience mutually agreed upon by students and teacher. The second project will expand the ambition of the first, its focus being one of whole-school, extra- and co-curricular enquiry, with a public audience invited to a formal sharing of the research, as seen through its performance. In contrast, Project #2 also involves experts external to the school, who helped to shape a vision for the aesthetic-educational product and helped in the creation of that product. Both projects (and eventual productions) have clear learning objectives but differing foci, which will be unpacked in this chapter. Both projects are broad and flexible enough to address specific student needs at my school (and arguably beyond), as well as curriculum ambitions and aesthetic demands, but with contrasting lenses. In contrast, the 2017 school production of *Sweeney Todd* could be seen as a relatively reductive exercise, as the story, characters, music and aesthetic demands have been pre-determined through the music and libretto, the weight of previous productions and through a contract with the right’s holders, which restricts creative departures, even when designed by a teacher to allow students agency in aesthetic or educational activity.

5.2 Pre-process Questionnaire

Prior to the start of the teacher/researcher-led text-deconstruction-devising dramatic processes, the students in the class were invited to answer a pre-process questionnaire³⁸. This was developed and executed to get some baseline data on the students and how they were currently positioned. This would then be contrasted with the post-process interviews, which were designed to unpack the experience and efficacy of the project. Before the questionnaire, the students were given some background to the project, but this was strategically limited so as not to influence the responses to the questionnaire. The pre-process questionnaire (Appendix B) was brief, being made up of nine questions across three sections

This questionnaire asked them to consider where they as students came from, their origins and asked them to consider their located-ness (Tūrangawaewae³⁹) as young New Zealanders. Questions were focused on three areas: “Origins”; “As a New Zealander”; and “What do you hope to gain from the (*The Pohutukawa Tree*) project”. Student-participants were invited to answer questions such as “Please describe your whakapapa”⁴⁰; “Where is your Tūrangawaewae?”; and “Do you think that a project such as this can help you reimagine your position as a young adult?” (Brown, 2016).

This pre-process data would then be able to be compared with the post-process data, which occurred after the play-making process had concluded and after the performance and NCEA assessment had taken place. The post-process data was generated by way of semi-structured interviews, led by me as teacher-researcher. The questionnaire generated some interesting data⁴¹. In the first question, students were invited to describe their whakapapa⁴². In response to this the student data revealed that they were from a wide range of countries, and most were either first-, second-, or third-generation migrants to Aotearoa New Zealand. Student responses detailed an affinity in their familial ties to countries such as Australia, South Africa, Germany, China, Malawi, Korea, Scotland, and Holland. One student saw himself as Slavic having parents from Serbia, even though he was born on the North Shore in Auckland. However, all the students did strongly recognise their identity as New Zealanders. The qualitative data articulated that the students proudly and primarily recognised their parents’ heritage, whilst secondarily recognising their own positionality.

³⁸ The pre-process questionnaire can be found in Appendix B.

³⁹ A place to which someone has a sense of belonging, thorough whānau, kinship or whakapapa: maoridictionary.co.nz

⁴⁰ Genealogy; family history or family tree.

⁴¹ N=24.

⁴² Genealogy in te ao Māori.

Question two was focused around issues that students saw facing Aotearoa New Zealand. The most common response was centred on immigration and the cost of housing. Students were modestly aware of local, national and world events, but few were regular consumers of the news media, whether this be print, internet or television. It was clear in conversation that most of the class were practising their articulation of critical opinion by espousing the views of their parents. This is something that I raised with the students and challenged them: I declared that part of my role was to open their eyes to other ways of seeing the world, new ways of finding out information about its workings, and ultimately forming their own opinions. I expressed that I would never question their political standpoint, once they had researched and begun to articulate one, however, I would always question a student who had not undertaken some research but instead, lazily, alighted upon the opinions of others rather than generating their own.

Question 3 detailed what current issues most concerned students as citizens of Aotearoa New Zealand. Responses included concerns around housing, immigration, and also climate change; social inequality, equity of social opportunity, social justice, and also lessening the gap between rich and poor. Equity and equality in Aotearoa New Zealand was a factor of life that the students consistently raised in their responses.

Whereas, across the responses to questions 1 to 3 the responses had been relatively homogenous and consistent in theme, the responses to Question 4 heralded a departure. In response to the question “Where is your Tūrangawaewae?” the former homogeneity vanished. Three students answered as might be anticipated, referring to their “home” as being the place where they feel most comfortable and a location that reinforces a sense of self and identity. One student (H) explained that he felt especial kinship to his home, as it was here that he was also born. Student S also indicated a sense of home being important, however, for him it was the region within which his home was situated, in this case the Waikato region. Another student (T) asserted that although his home was important, this was due to the proximity of his home to his passion, which when engaged in made him feel at peace and focused: this passion was hunting. Student U felt keenly connected to his European (Mediterranean) roots in Montenegro, even though this was the home (birthplace) of his father, and he himself had been born in Auckland⁴³.

⁴³ It is interesting to note that this same student has (in 2017), in Year 13, decided to return to Montenegro before the end of his school career.

One participant, Student M, gave a quite atypical response to the question. He answered that his Tūrangawaewae would be within the informal whānau of his spoken word poetry group in Auckland. He described that it was amongst this group of people that he felt “most at ease”, most comfortable, and able to engage with the complexity of himself and his developing, conflicted identity. Another noteworthy, and again atypical, response was from Student D, who declared that his Tūrangawaewae was most decidedly not in his country of birth, but here in Aotearoa New Zealand: my Turangawaewae is “this country, everywhere, as it is a haven in comparison to my original country of birth, South Africa” (Student D, personal communication, September 16, 2015).

Having reflected on this questionnaire process, I recognise now that a higher level of co-construction of the questions and ways of answering, between teacher and student, might have resulted in a more successful version that students could more readily engage with.

5.3 Classroom process & aesthetic demands

The Pohutukawa Tree (Mason, 1957) is a highly respected playtext by New Zealand playwright Bruce Mason (1921-1982). It is one of the first New Zealand plays to directly focus on bicultural themes and investigates the “destructive potential of contact between Māori and Pākehā” (Greenwood, 2002, p. 19).

The play still has the power to stir audiences, as seen in the “excited affirmation of its extraordinary perception and abiding truths”⁴⁴ of the Auckland Theatre Company production in September 2009, as the play possesses an “enduring strength... that contemporary playwrights lack and never even strive for in these more timorous times”⁴⁵ (theatrereview.org, 2010). Because of this reputation, the play is frequently produced by professional theatre companies, schools, drama schools as well as community groups.

The play’s origins began post-World War Two, as New Zealand writers started to address local concerns, examining a developing sense of a New Zealand identity, rather than a presumed identity as a British dominion⁴⁶, which had predominated in the years before. Plays that were written in this post-war period “had Maori as central characters or explored the ravages of colonial conquest” (Greenwood, 2002, p. 18). One of the very first plays to be written, and which endeavoured to address bicultural themes, was Allen Curnow’s *The Axe*.

⁴⁴ <https://www.theatrereview.org.nz/reviews/review.php?id=2472>

⁴⁵ This was a review of the production in 2010 at Toi Whakaari, the highly regarded New Zealand drama school.

⁴⁶ New Zealand became an independent nation in 1947.

Curnow's play (1948) was written in verse, reflecting the post-war English dramatic-cultural rediscovery of Elizabethan verse-drama, and was less realistic and more allegorical and metaphorical. Mason's play was written in 1957, in prose and in a clearly realistic style, possibly reflecting the new contemporary English dramatic voices of the left: Arnold Wesker, John Osborne, John Arden, and Edward Bond (Kershaw, 1992).

5.3.1 Concerns for the endeavour

Before I discuss some of the textual qualities of the play and the processes I undertook with the students, I would like to outline some issues around using *The Pohutukawa Tree* both as a text and pre-text. In 2018, during a presentation at the Drama New Zealand National Conference in Auckland, some teachers took umbrage at the use of Mason's play. I was delivering a section of my PhD, in fact this very research, detailing my in-class rehearsal methodology and my discoveries around new departures for such a methodology, utilising elements from te ao Māori (this can be found later in this chapter: 5.6.2). There was discomfort from some teachers that if Bruce Mason's play was the only voice and vision of bicultural drama from New Zealand that was taught, then these students would be experiencing another form of colonialism, as Mason mediates how the Māori voice and image was constructed and presented (personal communication, April 14, 2018). It was suggested that Mason's plays could and should be taught, but only as a part of a wider teaching unit on bicultural drama voices, which included writers who are also tangata whenua. Voices such as Witi Ihimaera and Briar Grace Smith and/or Hone Kouka, to name but three. The criticism of these teachers at conference reflects Black, cited by Greenwood (2002), who accuses Mason of being "sentimentally patronising towards the Maoris (sic)" and of "exploiting them more subtly" than his colonial ancestors by "relying on the verbal music" of Māori speech to raise his "drably naturalistic style" (1984, p. 40). As Greenwood latterly notes, "Pakeha writers who follow Mason in exploration of bicultural society receive similarly mixed judgements" (2002, p. 19). I must also note that I, myself as a Pākehā teacher and director, have chosen Mason, a fellow Pākehā dramatist in order to execute this unit of work, which can also be seen to be problematic, reflecting a potentially neo-colonial choice. To mediate these teachers' concerns, both at conference and here in this thesis, I would like to respond by explaining two relevant factors. Firstly, the notion of using Mason's text (in the manner that I will outline) is to examine the students' developing bicultural and multicultural knowledge, respect, identity and position. Mason's play is situated in both its time-period (the recent past) and style (realism) in such a way that it enables this exploration effectively.

Furthermore, I was initially encouraged to explore Mason's plays by a Māori friend and fellow drama teacher. Secondly, although I am focusing on Mason's play in this unit of work, other plays, written by tangata whenua and Pasifika playwrights, are studied at other points of the senior school drama curriculum (see Figure 1, p. 16). When engaging with these playwrights, reference is made to the whakapapa and tūpuna of dramatic writers, such as Mason, whose writing and vision has given later writers a roadmap of sorts to help guide their work or enable a clear divergence from Mason and other writers.

5.3.2 Not a synopsis

I will not give a full synopsis of *The Pohutukawa Tree* here, but the following factors are important, as they are the predicate to the curriculum work undertaken in class by these Year 11 students. For myself, and to enable an exploration of the play by my students, I see the play's central tension as being between Māori continuity (represented by Aroha Mataira), and forward-thinking commercialism and modernity (represented by the Atkinson family). This tension is most evident in the dispute over land ownership versus kaitiakitanga in Te Parenga, where the play's characters live, and that land is symbolised by the titular Pohutukawa tree. Most of the land previously protected by the Matairas has been sold – “slice by slice from the whale” (*The Pohutukawa Tree*, 1988, p. 19), reflects Aroha – with this small symbolic patch yet remaining. At the same time as Aroha struggles with her complex position in this community, her two children – Queenie, 17; Johnny, 19 – are also coming under the influence of modernity: Queenie is fascinated by teen romance, pop music, fashion and casual sex; Johnny by Robin Hood cartoons, heroism and alcohol.

5.3.3 The play's contemporary, educational value

For the author, the power of the play as an educational tool for this specific process is found in the authenticity of the characters, the context and setting, the accessible realism of character, and the contemporary political concerns, written, as it was, as the post-World War Two migration of Māori into the towns and cities (looking for employment) was occurring. This in turn created pronounced tension between Māori and Pākehā. In our recent past similar tension has arisen between the forces of conservatism and the forces of change. For example, the 2012 sale to Chinese company Shanghai Pengxin of the Crafar family-owned farms in New Zealand caused consternation amongst some in New Zealand, both the general public and commentators. As the then Prime Minister John Key recognised at the time, there will be “some concern and apprehension” from the public over the sale, “but I think that is true

whenever a farm is sold to foreign interests.” However, “as a country, we need foreign investment to grow” because “We’re a country that’s capital strapped; we’re always going to have some investment from foreigners.”⁴⁷ Knowledge of this sale, and debate about it in class, led directly to a scene being devised by the Year 11 students and written for them (Appendix C), to explore these tensions and concerns inherent in the narrative. Beyond the immediate local parallels between the play and the recent past in Aotearoa, there is also the insistent present. In the United States (US) the last few years have been characterised by ongoing fears around illegal migration from overseas into the US. In short, the stoking of uncertainties about an unknown ‘other’ led to the right-leaning, populist candidacy of Donald J. Trump, and his election as President of the US in 2016.

5.3.4 Deconstructing/reconstructing

Although there is great respect and aroha⁴⁸ for *The Pohutukawa Tree* amongst both the theatre fraternity and the teaching community, there is also an awareness that – like any art born of its time (Eagleton, 1989) – it is somewhat dated: in its language, textural structure, and its period references⁴⁹. Therefore, as a teacher-researcher, I was keen to find an aesthetic and pedagogical approach that would allow the themes and arguments of the narrative to become as persuasive, relevant and immediate to a 21st Century student, and audience, as possible. To do this I decided to approach the text using a “deconstructivist” approach (Schechner, 1985), by breaking the play apart and then reconstructing a new play from the ideas generated from its deconstruction, which meant it was possible to include contemporary, 21st Century ideas, parallels and perspectives on the text, narrative and characters, all of which eventuated from this deconstruction. At the heart of the process was the full participation and engagement of Year 11 drama students as intimate collaborators. During this process, the students would be shown how both the play and them could be taken through a “process of transformation” (Schechner, 1985, p. 40). The “deconstruction” is, for Schechner, an appropriate approach as after all some of the meaning and much of the impact that Mason originally intended *The Pohutukawa Tree* to possess has been lost. Schechner is philosophical on this point, reflecting that “performance originals disappear as fast as they are made... the world view is different, the audience is different, and the performers are different” (Schechner, 1985, p. 50). Therefore, an artwork must be made (or re-made) to

⁴⁷ <http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/6323850/Crafar-farms-sale-to-Chinese-group-approved>

⁴⁸ “Love” or “affection” in te reo Māori.

⁴⁹ There are also criticisms that the text is, potentially, an example of neo-colonialism, as it is written by a Pākehā (Mason) and not a Māori playwright.

reflect the participants engaged in the creative-dramatic work at the moment in time that it is (re-)created. Through this remaking, it was hoped that a dynamic intertextuality between the original text and the devised text would occur, allowing for a positive “tensiveness” (Bacon, 1979) between the two: “Intertextuality refers to a kind of play (fullness) between texts. One text plays with the next text; that is, the play of intertextuality is the process of reading through which one text refers to another text” (Finley, 2005, p.686).

A further benefit of the deconstruction process undertaken in the work with the Year 11s, is that what "happens at workshops like this is not only a deconstruction of the text and narrative of the play being done... but also a parallel deconstruction of the lives of the performers” (Schechner, 1985, p. 207). Schechner's position is also reflected by the words of John Berger, who – when discussing works of art – stated that "a reproduction, as well as making its own reference to the image of its original, becomes itself the reference point for other images” (Berger, 1972, p. 29). These "other images" are the imaginative and practical worlds and lives lived by the participants who are helping shape the material, to the benefit of their developing personal-cultural identity, locatedness and position. It was also hoped that the workshop and rehearsal on texts would create a “liminal space, and create an open and dialogic text” a place and space where students “can begin to address the need for social change” (Finley, 2005, p.690). And that it would reflect Holman Jones (2005) “Hopeful openness” in creating theatre for personal and social change:

First, Consider several ideas about theater and social change:

- That what happens in a performance can influence, and can *change*, what happens in the world
- That the performers-spectator relationship is not fixed but rather malleable-that a spectator can be an active agent (e.g., cocreator, participant) *in* a performance rather than a passive consumer *of* a performance
- That performance creates a space in which participants not only glimpse who and what they are and desire but also come into contact with different identities, positions, and desires (p. 777).

5.4 Learning *About* and *Through* the Aesthetic

Students had a dual opportunity during *The Pohutukawa Tree* project: to learn *about* the aesthetic and to learn *through* the aesthetic. For a Year 11 student involved in the project, learning about the aesthetic is essentially found in the direct experience of acting their specific role, and asking the relevant questions for that character and situation, during the rehearsal process. Learning through the aesthetic is the pre-planned engagement with ideas, notions, and ways of seeing and thinking, which occurs because of the students' involvement in the process(es).

For Bolton (1984) "the aesthetic is the way of looking at something" (p. 144), by both the teacher and student-actor participants. For the creative participants, the "nature of aesthetic intention" is "to expose the inner meanings of an event, to indicate universal implications" (Bolton, 1984, p. 145). Ideally, this exploration of the aesthetic will enable the participants to "penetrate deeply into fields which supposedly belong to the disciplines and develop points of view of their own without having to confront the intimidating power of orthodoxy" (Elliott, 1973, p. 66). In *The Pohutukawa Tree* project learning *about* the aesthetic included –

The demands of creating the performance work: rehearsal process(es) and application of conventions (ways of working); inquiry into the characters' age, background and life before, or outside, of the life of the play; use of Marxist Literary Criticism⁵⁰ (the historical, political, social and economic forces that influence the creation of art at a certain point in history); the devising of new scenes, and their subsequent writing and performance; and the execution of the student-actors' particular role(s).

Learning *through* the aesthetic included –

Metacognition, or the excitement of learning about themselves as learners (Flavell, 1976), as New Zealanders: in-class debates/conversations around relevant issues (e.g. Chinese land purchases in Aotearoa); development of oracy in te reo Māori⁵¹, new knowledge of Tikanga Māori⁵² and te ao Māori⁵³ in general; learning about key historical moments in New Zealand

⁵⁰ *Marxism and Literary Criticism*. Terry Eagleton (1989).

⁵¹ The Māori language. NB Aotearoa New Zealand has three official languages: te reo Māori, New Zealand Sign Language, and English.

⁵² Māori custom or traditional practice.

⁵³ The Māori World.

history (e.g. Te Tiriti o Waitangi⁵⁴; the Māori Battalion; Whina Cooper and the land marches; and Bastion Point).

5.5 Classroom Processes and initial process steps

The next task of the project, after the introduction, outline and pre-process questionnaires were completed, was to engage the Year 11 students in the project: to generate enthusiasm for a potentially obscure and nebulous notion for a young person – understanding how they are situated as young adults in Aotearoa New Zealand, through an appreciation of biculturalism and multiculturalism. To do this, I personalised the process by modestly detailing what it was to grow up in London (as I did, to a Kiwi mother), and my personal experience of developing an identity as a young adult, and how that identity has developed and changed in the subsequent years.

I explained that I was born into a lower middle-class family in South London. However, my social group was also made up of people from different classes, as I went to a low decile school, but played rugby amongst people of a higher class than myself. Compounding this was my wife's family who are upper middle-class. I therefore found myself becoming what I would term a 'social chameleon' in that my behaviour and manner would change or adapt as I moved between the different social groups in my life. This reflects Freire's assertion (1970) that "Problem-posing education affirms men and women as beings in the process of *becoming* – as unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality" (p. 65), and also Cahnmann-Taylor & Souto-Manning (2010) who stated that "Multicultural education was originally based on the premise of respecting the humanity of each and every person... it sought to prioritize teachers' and students' "personal, practical knowledge" as foundational to promoting change (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). "It proposed that we must validate personal experience" and that it "demands that we embrace the humanity of every student" (Ayers, 2004, p. 35).

As is the case with many young adults navigating their identity, I found it hard to determine exactly how I was socially positioned, and which one of my various identities truly reflected who I was in totality. Although many people might see themselves as social chameleons as they move from one social group to another, for a young person navigating such overlapping identities can be a challenge. Young adults go through many challenges during adolescence, from puberty and the associated physical changes, such as the fluctuations in appearance,

⁵⁴ Te Tiriti o Waitangi/The Treaty of Waitangi.

voice and also height, to the navigating of complex social structures at school and beyond. What a dramatic/theatrical-educational experience might add is a chance to engage with and critique change consciously, as “Theatre has but two stances in relationship to society at large: either to be tightly woven into broader social patterns, as rituals are, or to serve as an analytical or dialectical instrument for a critique of society” (Schechner, 1985, p. 106). Such changes in the self and social position can make it hard for a young adult to find a foothold and understand who they truly are. For myself, moving to Aotearoa New Zealand as an adult allowed me to reflect deeply and profoundly on my seminal experience as a young adult in London. As I began to navigate my new identities in New Zealand, I reflected on the experience of living and growing up in London. My New Zealand experience allowed me to re-visit and re-evaluate what it would be like for an adolescent to go through the same processes that I experienced, which in turn influenced the initial idea of *The Pohutukawa Tree* project, and how it might be formed and function.

After I personalised my experiences as a youth, I then undertook discussion with the students around the role of drama as a subject and occupation, during which students were invited to share positive moments in class where they had *played* with a different or new aspect of themselves in the safety of a class context, without censure or ridicule. Once this process had played out, I introduced the students to two things: my area of study for my PhD, and the play: *The Pohutukawa Tree*. The probable approach we would be taking – deconstructing the text, and recreating a new one – was then outlined, and the students were then invited to complete the pre-process questionnaire.

5.6 Understanding the text through non-textual dramatic play

As a class we did not just work predictably on the text; before we began formal rehearsal work on the play, we worked with a variety of pre-text exercises. As a teacher and as a director, I am keen that both myself and my student actors have ample opportunity to explore, to play and to investigate the possibilities inherent in the text and in the characters of a play, before formal work on the text begins. O’Toole (2006) describes pre-text in the following manner:

In drama education, for example, we often start with a ‘**pre-text**’... This pre-text maybe no more than a stimulus used at the commencement of a lesson. In research, the pre-text could be an area of the researcher’s own experience or intellectual interest... Research participants shape what is produced: they take the

form and make it their own. The outcomes cannot easily be predetermined by the researcher (p. 13).

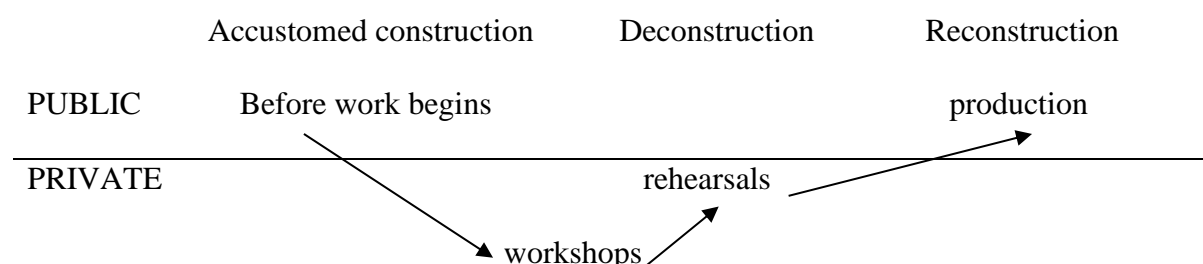
Most often director and cast are limited in how long they feel they can play with the text, as most productions lack the time allowance to “grasp the process I am talking about – to separate the deconstruction phase from the reconstruction. People too soon are doing the work of rehearsal” (Schechner, 1985, p. 287). In a performance context there is always a clear and present tension between student/teacher exploration and the time-limited nature of rehearsals: *The Pohutukawa Tree* project nominally had one term (nine weeks) to be executed in, to allow time for other units of drama work. My school context is unlike a professional theatre company context, such as the Berliner Ensemble, where Bertolt Brecht had six months to wrangle text, aesthetic, cast, production and audience as he did (Willett, 1964). So, it was essential to use time wisely and to be goal-focused whilst also allowing time for interesting avenues of departure, discussion and creativity.

Each exercise was designed to allow for a safe and secure process in which students could begin to unpack the play, allowing a rejection of the “Accustomed construction” of the play in favour of a “deconstruction” followed by a “Reconstruction” (Schechner, 1985, p. 289) of a new, co-constructed play. Our shared process would ultimately reflect the “Three kinds of workshop-rehearsal” which

are now occurring: (1) those used to transit whole performance texts; (2) those based on grammars that generate new performance texts; (3) combining 1 and 2. This last, far from being a sterile hybrid, is a most fertile response to postmodern circumstances (Schechner, 1985, p. 102).

A visual way of representing the process that was undertaken can be seen in Schechner’s (1985) Figure 6.4, in which the unseen (by an audience) private world of dramatic play and exploration is articulated:

“Figure 6.4. *This process can also be represented as a movement from a public space to private space and back into public space.”*



(Schechner, 1985, p. 289).

During the pre-text exercises, the processes designed by me would allow for these exercises to be engaged with by the students around the time (signified by the first arrow) between “Before work begins” and “workshops”. The ideas for text and character that eventuated would then be explored further and expressed through “rehearsals” prior to the performance, or the “production”, at the “Reconstruction” phase. At this point, a production of the performance text, both Mason’s words and those words generated and co-constructed by students and teacher, would occur.

What was undertaken were four drama exercises, designed to allow the students to experientially engage with complex ideas suggested by the text. Each of the exercises was focused on exploring what was just out of frame, out of view of the original playtext; however, it was hoped that what was discovered here would add value to the final creation.

5.6.1 Exercise 1: New Zealand Icons

In “Making Encounters Meaningful”, Gabnai (as cited in O’Toole & Donelan, 1996) recognised that *process* work prior to the focus on *product* was crucial. She states that “drama, its process more than its product, is the best way to learn how to experience our encounters qualitatively. Personally, drama teaches me to **ask** and to **listen** – to pay attention” (p. 97). The first and following three pre-text exercises focus purely on process, creating student experience and ideas around text, character, themes and tension, which can then be applied to the work on dramatic product.

During the first pre-text exercise, students were given a collection of images and words that were uniquely New Zealand. These included phrases like ‘God’s Zone’, ‘number 8 wire’, the image of a bach, of the beach, sheep, the All Blacks rugby team, a Marae, and the Four Square image (see Figure 9). The list was made up by what is colloquially known as Kiwiana.

Students were invited to consider which of these icons they felt most closely associated with, what image best defined them as New Zealanders. Students were also given a chance to consider ideas or objects that were not on this list, not reflected by an image on the worksheet. Every student in the project chose an icon that was Pākehā or euro-centric in its view; none chose an icon that came from te ao Māori. No judgement was made on this, no criticism; just recognition that the students had chosen an icon, arguably reflecting their culturally undernourished status.



Figure 9. Icons of Aotearoa New Zealand exercise

Anticipating that icons from te ao Māori were less likely to be chosen in this exercise by the students, a second exercise was undertaken in the days that followed the first.

5.6.2 Exercise 2: Precepts/Concepts in te reo Māori

In the early stages of the process, as we started to explore *The Pohutukawa Tree* playtext, students engaged in another exercise as a class around Māori Precepts. After we had read a couple of scenes together, performing the roles of Aroha, Queenie and Roy, Sedgwick and the Atkinsons, we started to deconstruct the scenes by looking at the central tensions that existed. One such key tension is around cultural and racial difference, and the relative relationship to land/whenua that Aroha has as opposed to the Atkinsons. Aroha's (Māori) connection to the whenua is profound, compelling and somatic; for the Atkinsons (Pākehā) the land is essentially a resource to be developed and utilised as profit dictated.

In the scenes the students worked on, they encountered and explored notions from te ao Māori that might be alien to them. Notions such as 'aroha' might be known to the students, but 'Kaitiakitanga' was less well known. Each of the following seven Māori precepts are found in the play and are therefore important to explore:

- Aroha (love; affection; caring; compassion);
- Tūrangawaewae (domicile; standing; belonging);
- Whānau (a connected and extended family);
- Whakapapa (genealogy; lineage; descent);
- Tikanga (procedure; custom; habit; method);
- Kaitiakitanga (guardianship; trust; stewardship);
- Tangata Whenua (indigenous population; local people; hosts).

In the exercise that follows, I first outlined how in my experience of my own (English) culture I had not fully considered such precepts in my own life, even though I was aware of them; they were part of the background noise of my life. It was only when studying them in te ao and te reo Māori that I realised their importance and found a way to re-engage with them. For example, Tūrangawaewae might be an alien notion to a culturally under-nourished Year 11 student, but through discussion we as a class not only discovered where Tūrangawaewae is to be found in the play, but also where it might be found in our own lives today, as we live them. This fact was modestly reflected in the pre-process questionnaires, and strongly reinforced in the post-process interviews,

Essentially, the exercise asked the students to examine the seven Māori precepts listed previously, and on a piece of paper provided to consider an order of importance for each individual student. Would Aroha be more important than Whānau; Tangata Whenua more important than Kaitiakitanga. Which would be at the top of that student's list. The seven words were printed on A3 card and placed at intervals around the drama space, and in silence the students roamed the space and considered each one, and then placed them in an order on their own A4 sheet. Once this was completed, we resumed as a class, and together we interrogated the lists, the order(s) and the decision-making that went in to making the determinations that the students made. What was revealed was that which I had experienced: these precepts from te ao Māori are not limited just to te ao Māori, but are experienced by all students, whether they be Asian-New Zealanders, Kiwi, or South African-New Zealanders; wherever people come from (or where they call their Tūrangawaewae) they recognise that these seven precepts shape their response to place, people and challenge. Through discussion we came to an understanding that, although the seven precepts were ranked by students, there was not really a sense of better or worse, of more important/less important. What eventuated is that a recognition of the precepts' value was key, whatever the order they occurred in on a piece of paper for a student.

5.6.3 Exercise 3: Land use in Aotearoa New Zealand

As students grew in confidence in expressing their ideas, views, perspectives and opinions students were introduced to notions in te ao Māori that were new to them. These notions were both relevant to the play and to contemporary socio-political concerns at the edge of the students' consciousness. A good example of this, and one stemming from tensions over land (whenua⁵⁵) in *The Pohutukawa Tree*, was around the customary or traditional use (the tikanga) of land by Māori, and its seeming complexity to a Pākehā. For the Matairas, land reflects and embodies the powerful, tangible link to their tupuna and their whakapapa. Their relationship to it is rich and complex. In contrast, the Atkinson's see the land as a resource to be utilised and exploited for profit and have little time for what Clive Atkinson regards as sentimentality (Mason, 1957). As the only Māori family in Te Parenga, the fictional town of the play, the Matairas have a tough time upholding their cultural values and norms.

During this exercise, students were given a photograph of what was described as pre-colonial Māori land, which included a building, a river, and grassland upon which cattle could be

⁵⁵ Whenua means both "land" and "placenta", articulating how important and spiritual the connection to the land is to Māori.

grazed, and all seemingly available for sale (Figure 10). Assuming the role of a Pākehā buyer in the early 1800s, the students were asked two questions: a. as potential buyers of this land what did they see in the image? and b. on buying the land what were their expectations? In response, every student, regardless of cultural or national background expressed the euro-centric notion that they saw the totality of the land, and that upon purchase they would expect to own all the land, and that this would remain in their family's ownership in perpetuity.



Figure 10. Land ownership images for exercise

It should be noted that each separate group of students (four in total) had the same picture, but one that had been coloured subtly differently, in order to emphasise either the grazing land, the river, the building, or the whole picture, and the students were invited to consider why the pictures had been coloured this way (Figure 10). The students' guesses were and have been since (in later iterations of the process) far from the mark. The explanation that students are given for the variance in colour is that each picture reflects the different potential uses for the land and water. In te ao Māori the use of land and water – belonging to another person or iwi – can be shared: different members of a community can pay for the right to use specific parts of the land only, without competition or contest. For example, one person might secure the right to fish from the land, whilst another the right to graze cattle on the same land, and another the right to store grain in the building; none, however, are seen as competing

forces. In contrast, the typical student response to such land use is that it can only be used by one individual, not shared, for their exclusive use only. Furthermore, students presumed that any purchase of the land would be forever, in perpetuity. However, in te ao Māori, it is commonly agreed that once the person who has purchased the land dies, it does not revert to their family but reverts to the iwi who made the original sale.

This exercise, and the process of thinking and discussion, in fact led to the writing of a newly imagined scene, in collaboration with the students, in which land ownership (and the tensions between Pākehā and Māori over the issue) were explored. Occurring in a court setting, the scene explored the argument between the two groups – Matairas and Atkinsons – as imagined before a Waitangi Tribunal official (Appendix C).

5.6.4 Exercise 4: hot-seating

Although a common staple of the drama classroom, and arguably overused or overly relied upon, hot-seating was a perfect convention⁵⁶ with which to apply to the students' development of role. It was also a strategic and effective way to explore new possibilities for a potential invented text being explored, beyond the world of Mason's play.

Each student was asked to consider embodying a character from the play, either male or female, old or young. Using the students' knowledge of their chosen characters, from the act or a scene from the play we had read and modestly performed together, each student sat in the presence of their peers in role and responded to a series of questions. These questions were either direct and closed or oblique and open-ended. The objective was to both ground the character(s) in an agreed set of facts whilst also exploring the possibilities for future histories and narratives of all the key characters in the play.

During my time working on the project, Roy McDowell had been a popular character for Year 11 students to explore, and numerous ideas for new text and invented scenes came from this character. To allow for differentiation, students who struggled with creating questions for themselves were given access to ready-made questions about each character. These could be used as a starter or ongoing resource to enable their questioning. Some ready-made questions used in the questioning of Roy McDowell included –

⁵⁶ NCEA defines a convention as a “way of working” with text or with/in character.

Direct:

- ‘Do you have genuine feelings for Queenie?’
- ‘Although very pretty, Queenie is Māori – how do you feel about dating a Māori, seeing as you are a Pākehā?’
- ‘Have you met Queenie’s mum, Aroha yet, and if so, how did you get along?’

Oblique:

- ‘Where do you see yourself in five years’ time? Does this future include Queenie?’
- ‘You are known to travel around lot and stay in places but only briefly – do you imagine staying in Te Parenga long, and if not where and when will you go?’
- ‘Are you currently in a relationship with another woman?’

As with all of the exercises undertaken, the stated aim was to generate new data and material that could be shaped into performative material, both in word and action.

5.7 Four consequences

From the exercises, four consequences were made apparent:

- i. The questions that students and teacher created and asked allowed students, through their answers, to posit possible futures and likely pasts. The likely pasts drew upon facts from *The Pohutukawa Tree* that were clear or implied but based in probable fact. Details about relationships with others, conflicts with friends, rivals or siblings, financial transactions, and emotional scars were examined and developed through the hot-seating process. Where new ideas or character epiphanies occurred, the students who enabled these moments felt a powerful connection, both to the idea and to the play, because they had discovered them. This was especially true of those students for whom the ideas or epiphany occurred whilst in role; the embodied nature of the discovery made the connections potent, emotional, somatic.
- ii. The questions and answers given during the hot-seating process eventuated in new scenes and new dialogue, much of which found its way into the final production. One memorable scene (Appendix C), which sprang from the question, ‘Are you currently in a relationship with another women?’ found us imagining a future Roy, settling down with Queenie and their child, only for his wife to arrive in Te Parenga to confront him. The scenes potency was predicated upon the surprise of the moment, as the new writing initially dispelled the notion of Roy as a player, a man with an eye for the ladies, only for his wife to appear and remind us of his essential truth as a character.

iii. As a teacher, the hot-seating process (coming as it did after three previous exercises) allowed the author as teacher-in-role to subtly and strategically use te reo Māori and tikanga in the questions. Students, whose knowledge of both at the start of the process was poor but was now developing, responded to this offer and started to reference appropriate tikanga and use te reo where they thought appropriate. I continued to model an expectation in my questioning and students responded. Embodying the character facilitated a comfort in the students when enacting an alien custom and tongue, as they experienced “an embodied experience of the cultural practices of the other. This practice has the intent of allowing the participants in and audience of the performance the opportunity to come to know the culture differently” (Alexander, 2006, p. 413). This comfort allowed for scenes to be devised, written and performed that contained a strong emphasis on te reo and tikanga, as seen in the invented scene after Aroha’s death (Tangihanga, Appendix C). An example of the strategic use of tikanga and/or te reo was seen in the simple way of initially greeting a character when on the hot seat: ‘Kia ora Roy, kei te pēhea koe?’ (‘Hi there, Roy, how are you?’). And in response, the teacher-in-role would say ‘Tino pai’ (‘I’m good.’), or some such other phrase. Student use of te reo Māori was also greeted by affirmation in te reo of their attempt to use the language.

iv. Hot-seating also allowed for a discursive process between student & teacher and student & student and student/teacher & C/culture(s), wherein the conversations about characters, themes, tensions, contemporary concerns can be linked back to the student, who starts to see how each, and all, relates to the self. ‘How should I feel about this character?’, ‘What would I do if confronted by such a situation?’, ‘Who is morally, ethically in the right here?’, ‘Whose cultural norms are most appropriate to apply here?’, ‘Should either tikanga or commercialism be allowed to prevail in this situation?’, and ‘How would I feel as a person situated between te ao Māori and te ao Pākehā, or between two rival, competing cultures for that matter?’ Thus, teacher and student, through conversation, can take what the play and its invented scenes suggest *generally* and start to discuss what it means to the individual *specifically*.

5.8 Into the Text

After the exercises were completed, an open-ended discussion was undertaken to unpack the choices the students had made and observed in the exercises, and the meaning behind these choices. Once completed, further discussions were begun about what students knew about Bruce Mason’s play, *The Pohutukawa Tree*. The students knew little of the play, however, from subjects such as social studies students did know some of the history that was

background to the play. Approaching the conversation from a Marxist literary critical approach (Eagleton, 1989), the history of Aotearoa New Zealand history was discussed as a class, including key events leading up to the time in which the play was written. These key events included: the gradual post-war separation of New Zealand from the United Kingdom; the Korean War; Māori urbanisation in the 1950s and 1960s; the Vietnam War; the United Kingdom joining the EEC and the impact on the New Zealand economy; the 1981 Springbok tour and protests; Whina Cooper and the land March; the protests at Bastion Point; and the establishment and results of the Māori language commission. During this and later conversations (as well as during workshops and rehearsals), other lenses with which to view the text from were also modestly explored, including feminist and post-feminist perspectives, constructivist, as well as post- and neo-colonial lenses.

Once this process had been set in motion, the class was invited to formally engage with *The Pohutukawa Tree*, both in modernist sense: as a complete play, and in a post-modernist sense: as a suggested text for developed performance, (Bogart, 2000; Schechner, 1985).

5.9 Workshop/rehearsal of Act 1 (latterly Act 2 & 3)

In earlier iterations of the project a class read and modestly staged scenes from Act 1 of the play – but not Act 2 or Act 3 – with an eye on themes, tension, characters' objectives, and socio-political context. Often the class paused as a discussion eventuated from the tensions evident between characters, or over the use of te reo Māori, or where conflict between te ao Pākehā te ao Māori revealed itself, or where parallels between the time and issues of the play could be made to the present. Thus, students began a process where they were learning *about* and *through* the aesthetic, often in the same moment, exchange or discussion. As the students gained confidence, we started to workshop and rehearse scenes from Act 1, but not all the scenes: we settled upon a selection that enabled a brief but clear *telling* of the major plot and character points of Act 1. By limiting the scenes, we would stage, the cast and myself gave ourselves time to workshop moments that we found interesting and wanted to explore whilst not being totally wedded to the text or normative sub-text. A good example of workshopping was the initial moment between Roy McDowell when he happens upon Queenie Mataira at the start of the play. As a class, we discussed Roy's super-objective and whether this would match or clash with his unit-objective (Benedetti, 1998; Magarshack 1988; Mitter 1992), and if the latter did happen what would eventuate. A character's super-objective is the primary goal and/or overarching desire or ambition of a character, and what they hope to achieve by

the end of the play. The unit-objective is a short-term goal, or what a character desires in a specific, limited time period of the play. For example, it could be argued that Hamlet's super-objective is to be revenged upon the person who was responsible for the "foul and most unnatural murder" of his father, King Hamlet. Once dedicated to the task, Hamlet seeks out an opportunity to be revenged upon his murderous uncle, Claudius, which shows itself most clearly in Act 3: "Now might I do it pat. Now he is a-praying. And now I'll do't. And so he goes to heaven" (Shakespeare, 1980, 3.1.74-75). It is Hamlet's realisation that if he kills Claudius (as he prays), Claudius' soul will go straight to heaven and not to hell as he wishes, that makes him postpone his revenge. In Roy's case, the students clearly saw the character as a 'player' a man with 'an eye for the ladies', and probably a manipulator of any potentially romantic situation. The students proposed that his super-objective was 'to flirt and to seduce' and hopefully this activity would result in sex. Accordingly, we rehearsed the scene with this super-objective front and centre. However, it was then proposed by a student that in his heart of hearts Roy was a racist, especially against Māori, and so when he reveals to Queenie, after she asks, "What else you heard about me?", that he knows she is a member of the "Only Māori family left here" (Mason, 1988, p.11), he has an epiphany that stops him mid-sentence. From this epiphany, or a provocation that Applebaum (1995) calls a "stop", in which "a moment of risk, a moment of opportunity" (Fels, 2012, p. 53) presents itself, the students and I considered and imagined what might happen next: would Roy storm off leaving Queenie confused; might Aroha arrive home early to the scene; might Roy fight his inherent racism to continue to woo Queenie, losing his charm and wit in the process? Each idea was a potential departure, an invitation to play and explore. The class and teacher also approached other moments and scenes in a similar fashion.

This choice to limit the use of scenes from Act 1 was made due to pragmatics: at the time, there existed only one Year 11 class, and workshop and rehearsal was time-limited. However, as the Year 11 cohort increased there was a chance to explore the play across two classes, using a modestly different approach. In class a. students were initially introduced to Act 1 and asked not to read Act 2 and 3; the class would devise, invent and write a new Act 2 and 3 based on a class exploration of Act 1 as the springboard. In class b. they approached the latter half of the play – Act 2 and Act 3, which in size is equivalent to all of Act 1 – and encouraged not to read Act 1. In this context, Act 1 was devised, invented and written based on an exploration of Act 2 and 3. The two new Acts (the devised Act 1, and the devised Act 2/3) could be as far into the future as was credible and feasible (for the class working with

Act 1) or as far back in the past (for the class working with Act 2/3). This allowed for scenes to employ some unusual and rewarding departures.

5.10 Resultant scenes & performances

There were many new scenes devised through the process with the students and written by me, predicated upon the exercise(s)-workshop-rehearsal methodology. Further examples, beyond the one concerning Roy McDowell, from a class working with Act 2 & 3, is a scene in which the students decided to recreate a battle scene from the past. This was between the English Pākehā soldiers and Whetumarama, Aroha Matairas revered tūpuna, suggested within the play. Another class explored scenes that took place in the future, where we meet the grandchildren and great grandchildren of Queenie and Aroha Mataira respectively.

Towards the end of the process, each Year 11 class performed to an invited audience of friends, whānau and classmates, sharing either an edited version of Mason's Act 1, plus the devised/invented Act 2/3, or the devised/invented Act 1, followed by Mason's Act 2/3.

During this public performance process, where the final plays were performed, a delightful, unforeseen by-product occurred. The Year 11 students were fascinated with what the other class had done and were keenly invested in what was to happen in the Act that each class had been forbidden to read, and as they watched the students learned about culture, context, society, empathy and their own positionality.

5.11 A measure of success

Holman Jones (2005, p. 773) suggests there are three criteria that can be used to measure the success of a dramatic project such as *The Pohutukawa Tree*, which she calls “The author’s list of autoethnographic actions and accomplishments”:

- *Participation as reciprocity.* How well does the work construct participation of authors/readers and performers/audiences as a *reciprocal* relationship marked by mutual responsibility and obligation (Elam, 1997, p. 78; Hooks, 1995, p. 221)?
- *Dialogue as a space of debate and negotiation.* How well does the work create a space for and engage in meaningful dialogue among different bodies, hearts, and minds (Conquergood, 1985, p. 9; Denzin, 1997, p. 247)?
- *Evocation and emotion as incitements to action.* How well does the work create plausible and visceral lifeworld and charged emotional atmosphere as an

incitement to act within and outside the context of the work (Bochner, 2000, p. 271; Denzin, 1997, p. 209)?

One of the ways to determine the efficacy of the project was to examine the actors' and audience's response in light of these actions and accomplishments, as well as to examine the student data from the post-process questionnaires.

5.12 Student Data

The ambitions for this project meant nothing if the generated experiential-audience-performative data does not support the central hypothesis. The data generated during the project was four-fold:

1. Pre-process questionnaires completed by students (Appendix B);
2. Anecdotal observations recorded by me as the researcher;
3. Post-process semi-structured interviews led by me as researcher;
4. Comparisons to the school's Māori Education Plan data.

I would first like to unpack some of the responses to a post-process questionnaire; to save time the post-process questionnaire questions were asked by myself during a relaxed post-performance de-brief.

Question 1 asked, now having gone through the project, 'do you feel yourself more connected towards your home country of Aotearoa New Zealand?' Every student agreed that they did, to a lesser or greater extent. Student B explained that he feels both more connected to his birthplace of Aotearoa, but also to his parents' home, Fiji, even though prior to the project he felt some conflict due to his 'embarrassment' at a lack of cultural knowledge of Fijian life and custom. The project had given him comfort to feel more relaxed in how he approaches engaging and questioning his identity in a Fijian context, whether in New Zealand or Fiji (Student B, personal communication, September 16, 2015). Student M shared some of this new-found comfort: born to Kiwi parents in Australia he recognised and had gained comfort in his cultural identity being 'fluid' – 'sometimes I identify as an Australian, sometimes as both. Identity can be fluid.' Student H reflected that as he came to understand issues in te ao Māori he found a 'greater cultural awareness that makes me feel connected to my sense of myself as a New Zealander' (Student H, personal communication, September 16, 2015).

In regards of anecdotal observations, it was apparent from my contemporaneous notes that on numerous occasions students, with either underdeveloped positions or those that were probably parroting opinions of their parents or prominent peers, started to shift in their

attitudes and agendas. This could sometimes be seen in a single moment. Such shifting was best exemplified in a class that approached the relevant politics of the Crafar-owned farms and their sale to a Chinese corporation. Sadly, there was still some subtle racism directed towards Chinese-New Zealanders, and the Crafar farm issue was a lightning rod that provoked strong responses. The handful of students who expressed racially charged comments, however, were open to being challenged. This occurred when the corollary of the experience of Māori (when first approached by Pākehā to buy land in Aotearoa) was discussed, and the racism experienced by them. Through this discussion, attitudes were mediated somewhat and alternative perspectives on the issue of land ownership were explored.

5.13 Unintended discoveries – towards a new rehearsal methodology

As the processes were undertaken with students on *The Pohutukawa Tree* project, as found in the various exercises and outcomes, I reflected in my journal that my normal manner of class process and rehearsal was changing, and for the better. On deeper reflection, there was a recognition that I was moving beyond what had previously been for me normative and typical, as I began to conceive (through small incremental steps) a new rehearsal methodology. This new rehearsal methodology was a fusion of a. my former education and how I had previously engaged in rehearsal processes in previous contexts, with b. my current research and what I was discovering could be enabled and achieved in my new context (country and school). Essentially, this new rehearsal methodology was a fusion of a Western-normative approach with facets taken from a New Zealand classroom context, plus a fusion with elements of te ao Māori; a blending of my former creative education and working practice with my current one.

As I researched further and discussed my changed and changing processes with my teaching colleagues (who worked in similar contexts), I came to understand that many New Zealand secondary school drama teacher-practitioners in Aotearoa New Zealand find themselves in a state of flux. Many articulated how they struggled to find the most suitable and efficacious form of rehearsal methodology to execute, when working with young adults on an in-class or extra-curricular drama/theatre product. What can eventuate is a profound tension in a rehearsal room: between a drive by a teacher for the student-actor to experience agency versus a more formal approach of a teacher working in the role of director; between a rewarding process for students versus a quality final dramatic-theatrical product for an

audience. This can lead to a compromised result, one that is neither aesthetically satisfying nor educationally sound. The research and practice undertaken around *The Pohutukawa Tree*, and detailed in this section, has led to a proposed alternative paradigm of in-school, educational-theatrical rehearsal process, born specifically from work in a Decile 9 Auckland school, in a large drama department, committed to notions of student agency, social justice, multiculturalism and pluralism, and with an awareness of obligations towards Te Tiriti o Waitangi, Te Ao Māori and Biculturalism in 21st Century Aotearoa New Zealand. The proposed alternative paradigm reflects Freire's statement that "The dialogical theory of action does not involve a Subject, who dominates by virtue of conquest, and a dominated object. Instead, there are Subjects who meet to name the world in order to transform it" (Freire, 1970, p. 148).

A model of the new paradigm has been developed to frame and articulate the new possibilities that come from this research (Figure 14, p. 114).

5.14 A rehearsal room: positionality & context

I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged (Brook, 1968, p. 11).

For many years, I lived by the quote above, an aphorism of Peter Brook's; however, my work in Aotearoa New Zealand has revealed this quote to be limited, reductivist and lacking. In a bicultural context, working with multicultural students, I needed to rethink the values and principles that had guided my pedagogical and aesthetic work in the previous period.

As I researched, and contemplated a new rehearsal methodology, there was a recognition that as a teacher-practitioner, theatre-maker and beginning researcher, my position is one of *spectator/manipulator*, and aligns with that described by Schön (1983):

there is an objectively knowable world, independent of the practitioner's values and views... His stance toward inquiry is that of spectator/manipulator...

Through his transaction with the situation, he shapes it and makes himself a part of it. Hence, the sense he makes of the situation must include his own contribution to it. Yet he recognizes that the situation, having a life of its own distinct from his intentions, may foil his projects and reveal new meanings. From this paradoxical source derive the several features of a stance toward inquiry

which are as necessary to reflection-in-action as the norms of on-the-spot experiment and the uses of virtual worlds (p. 163).

I do not hover at the fringes of my teaching, directing, or research process, observing dispassionately-objectively, but rather I lead such processes, and experienced much of the joy and frustration that my students felt, as we explored complex ideas and ambitions in theatrical form together, collaboratively.

5.15 Bogart, Freire, Schechner and Greenwood & Wilson: foundations for an alternate rehearsal methodology

Numerous writers influenced have influenced my past and current research and practice, which informs my ever-developing rehearsal methodology, however, reading alone was not the focus of my study; I would have to live it also, for “The locus of study is not the object of the study. Anthropologists don’t study villages (tribes, towns, neighborhoods...); they study *in* villages” (Geertz, 1973).

The books that have influenced my new thinking, and the creation of a new rehearsal methodology and paradigm – Figure 14 – include four in particular, which speak to the particulars of this project: *A Director Prepares*, by Anne Bogart, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, by Paulo Freire, *Between Theater & Anthropology*, by Richard Schechner, and *Te Mauri Pakeaka*, by Janinka Greenwood and Arnold Manaaki Wilson.

5.15.1 Bogart

Bogart (2001) discusses the numerous words that different theatrical cultures use to describe the rehearsal process(es). Such knowledge impacts the way the theatre-makers and cast engage with the process of bringing what is written on the page to life, and how we engage with the aesthetic.

As I reflected on what I had done previously in my rehearsal room with what I was currently doing in *The Pohutukawa Tree* Project, I was struck by the word in the English language (and in UK/US theatrical culture), used to indicate the practice of animating a performance text: *rehearsal*. This word seemingly privileges the auditory aspects of the process: to *re-hear* the performance event, and by implication review it, make necessary amendments, and move on to the next unit of rehearsal. When the word rehearsal is set into the context of taking place in what the Greeks called the *auditorium*, this bias towards the auditory/hearing sense is further underlined. This word now appeared limited, reductive when applied to the work that I was

doing in class. What Bogart allowed me to do was have a window into other rehearsal rooms in other cultures, and to see if these cultures privileged the auditory element of the rehearsal process. Did they? Well no: in French theatre-making the word used (instead of rehearsal) is *répétition*, or in English the rather prosaic, practise. In Japanese the word *keiko* is used, which means to perfect through practise. In German, however, one finds the word that – to my mind and educational-theatrical philosophy – best reflects the rehearsal culture I was striving to create in *The Pohutukawa Tree* project (as well as in my general teaching practice): *probe* (Bogart, 2001). *Probe*, as a verb, means *to investigate* or *to explore*, and with a postmodern, deconstructivist approach to textual analysis and execution (Schechner, 1985) at the heart of my process ambitions, probe appears to be a perfect word for what we should undertake in rehearsals with my students (Bogart, 2001, p. 45). Such philosophical positioning in terms of investigation and exploration impacts the way(s) that the student-actor and teacher-director alike can explore an aesthetic.

5.15.2 Freire

Having alighted upon a new way to characterise the rehearsal room, I turned my reading to examples of how a relationship between teacher-director and student-actor might be formulated. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1970) sets out a manifesto for a revolutionary realignment of the teacher-student relationship, in order to democratise the process of education, and by extension, rehearsal. Much of what Freire stated has now found its way both explicitly (in curricula and education ministry mandates) and implicitly (in the execution of their perceived role by teachers). However, implementation is far from universal. Freire recognised that

revolutionary leadership must accordingly practice *co-intentional* education. Teachers and students (leadership and people), co-intent on reality, are both Subjects, not only in the task of unveiling that reality, and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge (p. 53).

The shared re-creation of position, and knowledge (cultural, national, social and self-knowledge) are some of the aims of *The Pohutukawa Tree* project, and therefore need a robust, new paradigm (in terms of rehearsal) to make this possible. Freire also recognised what I (in part) have felt is evident in certain deficit model rehearsal methodologies, in that students should no longer be “docile listeners” but rather “co-investigators in dialogue with their teacher” (p. 62). He explained that “Problem-posing

education affirms men and women as beings in the process of *becoming* – as unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality” (p. 65). The power of Freire’s ideas, and its potential to influence an alternative model of rehearsal, is because it is able to “resolve the contradiction between teacher and student” and therefore allow both to “address their act of cognition to the object by which they are mediated” (p. 74).

5.15.3 Schechner

If in the experimentation and later creation of this new rehearsal methodology and paradigm Bogart would be my intellectual entrée, Freire a foundation stone, then the post that supports the canopy of ambition would be the writing of Richard Schechner, the American director and academic. Schechner’s role as theatre-maker also overlaps with the role of cultural anthropologist. He recognises that “Either permanently... or temporarily... performers – and sometimes spectators too – are changed by the activity of performing” (Schechner, 1985, p. 4). My reading of this relates not only to the act of final rehearsed performance to an audience, but to the playing in role in workshops prior to any performance. For Schechner it is in the theatrical *workshop*, and not rehearsal, where the meaningful work on a text occurs and where the actors and creatives are challenged: “Workshop is a deconstruction process, where the ready-mades of culture (accepted ways of using the body, accepted texts, accepted feelings) are broken down and prepared to be ‘inscribed upon’” (p. 99). In fact, Schechner goes further and states that a drama-theatrical “Workshop is analogous to the liminal-transitional space of rituals”, which is a far more virtuous, creative, meditative state to exist in than rehearsals, which “are the opposite of workshops. In rehearsals longer and longer strips of restored behavior are arranged to make a new unified whole: the performance” (p. 99).

For Schechner, giving license to departures from a concrete performance playtext, as was done with *The Pohutukawa Tree*, through workshops is not a concern, which in turn gives license to in-class process ambitions with Year 11 students. Schechner (1985) explains the value of ignoring the concrete playtext through articulating the transitory nature of performance.

Hard as it may be for some scholars to swallow, performance originals disappear as fast as they are made. No notation, no reconstruction, no film or videotape recording can keep them. What they lose first and most importantly is their immediacy, their existence in a specific space and context... the occasion is

different, the world view is different, the audience is different, and the performers are different (p. 50).

Schechner's power as a researcher, dramaturg and theatre-maker is in his recognition (and promotion of the notion) that older, more established, concretised⁵⁷ texts, need to be re-evaluated and broken open with postmodern approaches that allow for new interpretations to come to light. These new interpretations are enabled not through the traditional process of a rehearsal but in a workshop where "a deconstruction of the text and narrative of the play" can be undertaken, whilst at the same time there is a "parallel deconstruction of the lives of the performers" (p. 287). Schechner felt keenly the frustration that most "productions are not allowed enough time" to "grasp the process I am talking about – to separate the deconstruction phase from the reconstruction. People too soon are doing the work of rehearsal" (p. 287).

Schechner delineates what a relationship between workshop and rehearsal might look like, recognising a movement from "a public space to private space and back into public space" (1985, p. 289). Schechner believes that the deepest, most personal, sacred and private state of the process for director and actors is during the workshops. These workshops then morph into rehearsals and then into production. Schechner gives an image of a theatre artist "diving" into the process, reaching the deepest, most personal and sacred space for the actors and teacher-director, of the dive during the workshops, and then starting to resurface towards production (or performance). This is crucial for Schechner and is a process I have come to subscribe to. Schechner argues that "workshops find, reveal, and express material; rehearsals give this stuff performative shape", which is possible because "workshops are liminoid, creating an 'as if' scalpel used to cut into the actual lives of those making the performance" (p. 103).

5.15.4 Greenwood and Wilson

Working with a bicultural play, in a bicultural nation, and with an ambition to inculcate a sense of reconciliation with and respect for tangata whenua, I decided I needed to apply notions of Kaupapa Māori education. As Freire observed:

⁵⁷ "If during a rehearsal of one of Brecht's plays, according to his authorized mise-en-scene, it is suspected that some gesture is not being performed as Brecht intended it, the gesture is checked back against the Modelbuch (and other documentary evidence). What the Modelbuch says goes. It is the authority" (Schechner, 1985, p. 43).

The *raison d'être* of liberation education, on the other hand, lies in its drive towards reconciliation. Education must begin with the solution of the teachers-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers and students (1970, p. 53).

I recognised that in my practice and research I had applied some elements of kaupapa Māori, as found in Greenwood's and Wilson's research and practice (2006), such as *ako*⁵⁸ and *tuakana-teina*⁵⁹. For Greenwood "biculturalism is a necessity as well as a choice" (Greenwood, 2002, p. 11), for both teacher (*kaiako*) and student alike (*akonga*) must recognise the inherent differences and similarities of their positions as teacher/learner and learner/teacher, and actively engage in a philosophical shifting (Freire, 1970; Greenwood, 2002 & 2006).

Greenwood's groundbreaking work with Arnold Manaaki Wilson, in her *Te Mauri Pakeaka* project, reflects these concepts, values and aspirations (Greenwood & Wilson, 2006). In her book of the same name, Greenwood articulates the art making that was undertaken in the project, and the community building of learners that occurred both in order to make the art, and because of the artmaking in the following terms:

The immediate objective in each workshop was to create an artwork. The intention was to move... towards the experience of living together and of making... It also allowed participants to re-examine roles they usually took... The long-term aim was to create a third face for New Zealand: that of a dynamic biculturalism... For many of the thousands who participated in Pakeaka, the experience constituted a first journey into a previously unknown space. It offered them a chance to physically cross the threshold into a Māori world (Greenwood & Wilson, 2006, p. 5-6).

In this quote I both recognised what I was currently doing in my work on *The Pohutukawa Tree*, whilst recognising that I could also do more to achieve bicultural goals, and plan and execute it more effectively.

⁵⁸ "The concept of *ako* describes a teaching and learning relationship, where the educator is also learning from the student and where educators' practices are informed by the latest research and are both deliberate and reflective. *Ako* is grounded in the principle of reciprocity and also recognises that the learner and *whānau* cannot be separated" (Ka Hikitia, 2008, p.20).

⁵⁹ *Kuia* and *kaumatua* have taught me that the *tuakana-teina* relationship works best when seen as an integral part of traditional Māori society. In this, an older or more expert *tuakana* (brother, sister or cousin) might guide a younger or less expert *teina* (originally a younger sibling or cousin of the same gender). This would be in a learning environment that recognises the value of *ako*. However, the *tuakana-teina* roles may be reversed at any time.

Whilst recognising the influence of research by Bogart, Freire, Schechner et al (and the aesthetic and pedagogical ambitions of my PhD), it was crucial to introduce my culturally under-nourished students to notions from te ao Māori. It is a way of seeing (Berger, 1972) that privileges the bicultural nature of our nation and alerts the participants (students; teachers; audience) to alternative perspectives on the relationship between Māori and Pākehā⁶⁰, and by extension, towards all peoples of varying cultural backgrounds.

In my research I found that the two precepts within te ao Māori and kaupapa⁶¹ Māori that were most valuable to my research were *ako* and *tuakana-teina*⁶². *Ako*, is the word in te reo Māori that describes the exchange between teacher and student. This exchange is not predicated upon a hierarchy of status between the teacher (high status; the knower) and the student (low status; the potential receiver). *Ako* recognises that – under the right conditions – the teacher can also be the student, and that the student can also be a teacher, in a democratic sharing of knowledge, experience and position. It reflects what Greenwood saw in *Te Mauri Pakeaka*: “What happens in the third space is unscripted. It evolves out of dialogues, confrontations, accommodations, risk-taking and unplanned discoveries... it engages with the development of something new” (Greenwood & Wilson, 2006, p. 12). Such a something new could be either the artwork or a relationship to people, place and/or culture, or perhaps all, simultaneously.

Democratic notions of education found in te ao Māori (*ako*; *tuakana-teina*), that were being practiced by iwi and in kaupapa Māori, were also being propounded by Freire forty years ago within the academy. What unities both Freire’s and Greenwood’s work is their proposal that we break away from educational models and classroom practice predicated on “educational system(s) of the 1970s”, which were by nature “monocultural”, dominated by “a single cultural value system” (Greenwood & Wilson, 2006, p. 35). This is not just in terms of the challenging, developing notion of biculturalism in Aotearoa, but also the culture of the perceived hegemony of teacher over the student. As Greenwood has seen in her projects, and as I hoped for in mine, “Teachers knelt on the floor with their students, arguing, without claim to authority” (p. 41).

⁶⁰ I have been cautioned, however, by kuia and kaumatua that not all tangata whenua necessarily speak with one voice. My teachers have taught me that no iwi presumes to speak for Māori in broader national terms, but rather the unique identity of Māori, tangata whenua and/or mana whenua is upheld in specific regional locales (B. Silich, personal communication, 2010).

⁶¹ (Noun) topic, policy, matter for discussion, plan, purpose, scheme, proposal, agenda, subject, programme, theme, issue, initiative.

⁶² <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/>

5.16 Condensing Thought and Practice: a diagram depicting the divergence between a Euro-American *traditional-linear* rehearsal model versus an *alternative* paradigm

My preferred manner of explaining this new way of engaging in a rehearsal process is by describing the paradigm that was created in light of the rehearsal practice undertaken with the Year 11 class, which was (in part) co-constructed with the students.

Over time my teaching, reflection and research began to aggregate into a new way of seeing, and a new potentiality in, the rehearsal process. This was not to be a rehearsal method that was driven purely by the need to create a final performance product. But one, rather, that was driven by embracing various processes that mitigate in favour of a rewarding bi-/multi-cultural, aesthetic and learning experience, for students and teacher alike.

To help me better articulate my new way of seeing the rehearsal process I created the two diagrams that follow, Figure 11 and Figure 12. When seen side by side, comparisons between the two methodologies can be explored. The desire to create a new rehearsal methodology, whilst recognising its antecedents, reflects Schechner's research (1985) when he stated that

Many other directors... felt this same double tug... (in that they) ... neither interpret old texts nor compose wholly new ones but practice a kind of theatrical bricolage, deconstructing/reconstructing texts and mises-en-scènes from a variety of sources... But mainstream Euro-American theater still works from literary texts (p. 230).

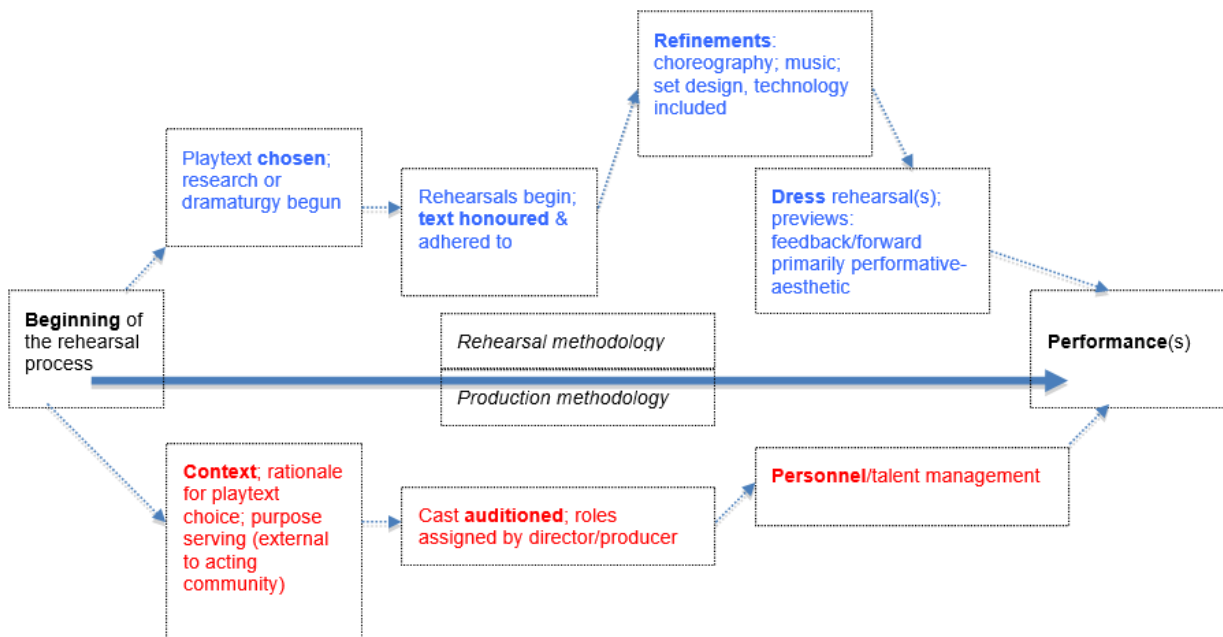


Figure 11. Euro-American *traditional-linear* rehearsal paradigm

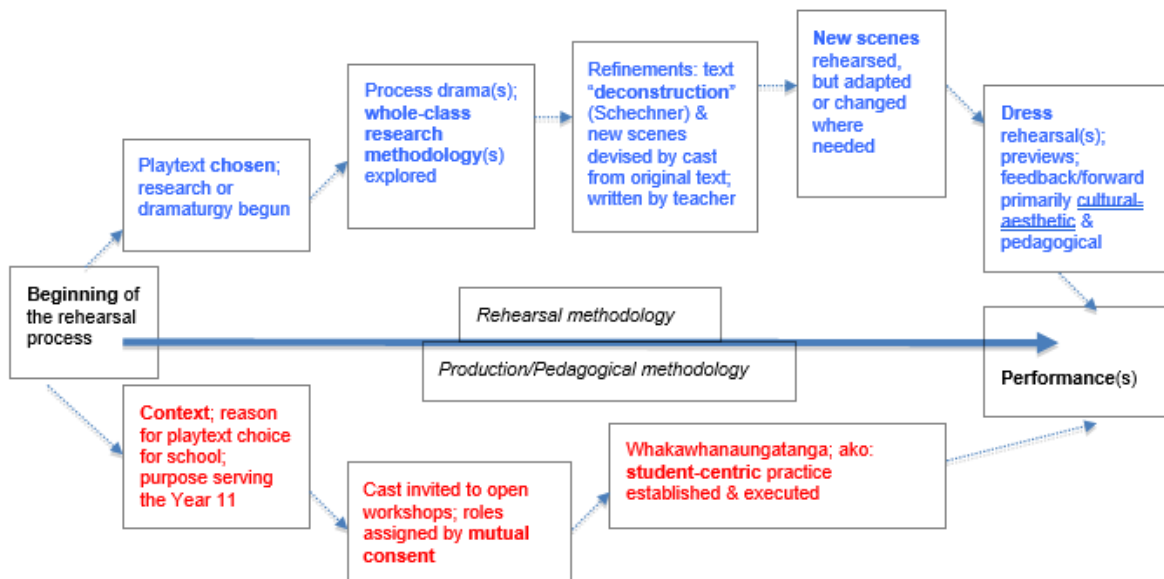


Figure 12. *The Pohutukawa Tree* alternative rehearsal paradigm

Figure 11, the Euro-American *traditional-linear* rehearsal model, is a model that many directors would apply to the time-precious rehearsal period, which traditionally last between three and five weeks⁶³, in professional theatre, or three to six months in a school context⁶⁴.

⁶³ Bertolt Brecht was a radical exception, with his heavily state-sponsored theatre (the Berliner Ensemble) having rehearsal periods of up to six months.

⁶⁴ Schools often rehearse afterschool two to three times a week, with possibly a weekend rehearsal day, plus (if fortunate) a production camp over a long weekend.

This model I have developed through my own training and practice as a theatre director in Europe and the US, and my experience of discussing rehearsal methodologies with other theatre directors, and whilst chair of the Directors' Guild of Great Britain's theatre group.

5.16.1 Choice & Context

In the first instance, the start of the process(es) begins when a producer or director feels the impetus to consider a new or old text for performance. This can have many antecedents or energies that precipitate the decision to stage (or restage) a text. For example, a touring production of George Orwell's *1984*⁶⁵ has captured the zeitgeist and imagination of audiences worldwide, as it taps into the hysteria around Russian hacking of the US elections in 2016. In my project, and in the use of Bruce Mason's 1960 play *The Pohutukawa Tree*, my desire was to use the play as a tool to enable investigation of the Year 11 students' national and cultural identity (as articulated earlier in this chapter). I am grateful to the estate of Bruce Mason whose permission enabled me to explore and experiment with the text of *The Pohutukawa Tree* as I did.

From the diagram outlining the new paradigm (Figure 12), the reader can see that there are two pathways: the Rehearsal Methodology and the Production Methodology. These two pathways are differentiated by a Production Methodology (PM), which is the foundation that allows the Rehearsal Methodology (RM) to occur. The two – PM and RM – are separate functions of bringing the text to life – from page to stage – however, they overlap in many areas. For reasons of clarity I have kept the two quite separate.

In Figure 11, the Euro-American *traditional-linear* rehearsal paradigm, I have nominated a hierarchical-typical process. The producer and/or the director, with the aim of serving an external objective, choose the playtext (the circled Figure 13a, p. 114).

This could be, for example, to create a piece of dramatic art that reflects the zeitgeist. The producer and the director, who are looking for talent that fits their vision of what the final product will look like, then audition a cast. There is an inherent problem with this notion: that the product is almost predetermined⁶⁶; flexibility, autonomy, participant voice, agency and

⁶⁵ <https://www.atc.co.nz/auckland-theatre-company/2017-18/1984/>

⁶⁶ In *The Shifting Point* (1988), Peter Brook discusses how it is only once the play is performed that he finally realises the actors he *should* have cast, the set design he *should* have executed, the music that he *should* have had accompany the performance, but by this point it is too late.

spontaneity are all but denied, which, in educational terms, is a bankrupt kaupapa (philosophy). As Freire wrote, the teacher's

efforts must coincide with those of the students to engage in critical thinking and the quest for mutual humanization. His efforts must be imbued with profound trust in people and their creative power. To achieve this, they must be partners of the students in their relations with them (Freire, 1970, p. 56).

By contrast in Figure 12, an alternative non-hierarchical-atypical process, based in part upon Bogart, Freire, Schechner, Greenwood and Tikanga/Te Ao Māori. In this paradigm, the playtext is chosen as a response to the internal forces of the institution and its student (and teacher) population (Figure 14a, p. 114); to serve the student-actor need and further the narratives and discourses of the institution.

Whereas in Figure 11 the cast is chosen through a typical audition process (which is inherently hierarchical), in Figure 12 the student actors are invited to audition workshops, where the process is transparent and co-constructed, framed around notions of student agency, as can be seen in Ako and Tuakana-Teina. In the final analysis, roles in what will become the performance product are assigned by mutual consent (teacher-director in negotiation with student-actor). It must be recognised that paradoxically the choice by the teacher-director in Figure 12 could be seen to reflect some of the limited values and processes of the producer/director in Figure 11, as both imagine a product they wish to explore (Figure 11: Product; Figure 12: Process). However, Figure 12 offers far greater flexibility for student-actors and their participant voice, as I will explain further.

5.16.2 Research

Within a contemporary professional rehearsal methodology, many directors employ the services of a dramaturg. The dramaturg's role, and the purpose of dramaturgy, is one of objective research and analysis, on behalf of the production. Often reporting to the director, and sometimes fulfilling the role of assistant director, the dramaturg traditionally undertakes research into the period that the playtext was set in, the politics and economic situation of the time (Eagleton, 1989). Beyond this, the director might charge the dramaturg to investigate other productions of the same playtext, and/or apply various lenses of analysis to both playtext and previous productions of the playtext (that is presuming that it is not an original text). For example, constructivism, post-structuralism, modernism, post-modernism, post-colonialism, feminism and post-feminism viewpoints might also be researched by the

dramaturg in order to better prepare the director, and sometimes the cast. In the latter example, the dramaturg might speak with or lecture the cast on her or his discoveries. However, as you can see in this example, the presence of hierarchy and typicality is pronounced. In the *alternative* paradigm, Figure 12, it is proposed that, as was done for *The Pohutukawa Tree* project, that the dramaturgy is a shared process of the whole class and students (Figure 14b, p. 114).

The power in such a teacher choice is in the democratisation of the process, which as Freire suggested is a “dialogical theory of action (which) does not involve a Subject, who dominates by virtue of conquest, and a dominated object. Instead, there are Subjects who meet to name the world in order to transform it” (1970, p. 148). Each student is charged with an area of interest and/or importance, born from the discussion within the drama class and workshop. They then researched that area during and after class, and then report back to the class⁶⁷, where questions and realisations are shared amongst the students. Non-teacher-directed discussion can then occur, and unbidden insights and unexpected outcomes are welcomed. At the heart of this process are both *ako* and *tuakana-teina*, as articulated previously. The students are endowed with *expertise* by the teacher-director and his peers, and all listen and respond to the student-researchers with respect for the student’s knowledge(s) generated through this process. During this process (but not exclusive to this period), the teacher is able to model and encourage students to also model *whakawhanaungatanga*. In te ao Māori and in tikanga⁶⁸ Māori, *whakawhanaungatanga* is the demonstration of care and respect in relation to the student and their history and story, regardless of where that student originates. In a project such as *The Pohutukawa Tree*, which examines cultural and national locatedness, this is a key precept in tikanga to include in the class workshop processes.

⁶⁷ Students were being assessed against AS1.5 for this task; AS1.6 was the Achievement Standard being used as the assessment tool for the other aspects of this Year 11 project.

⁶⁸ Māori practice and/or custom.

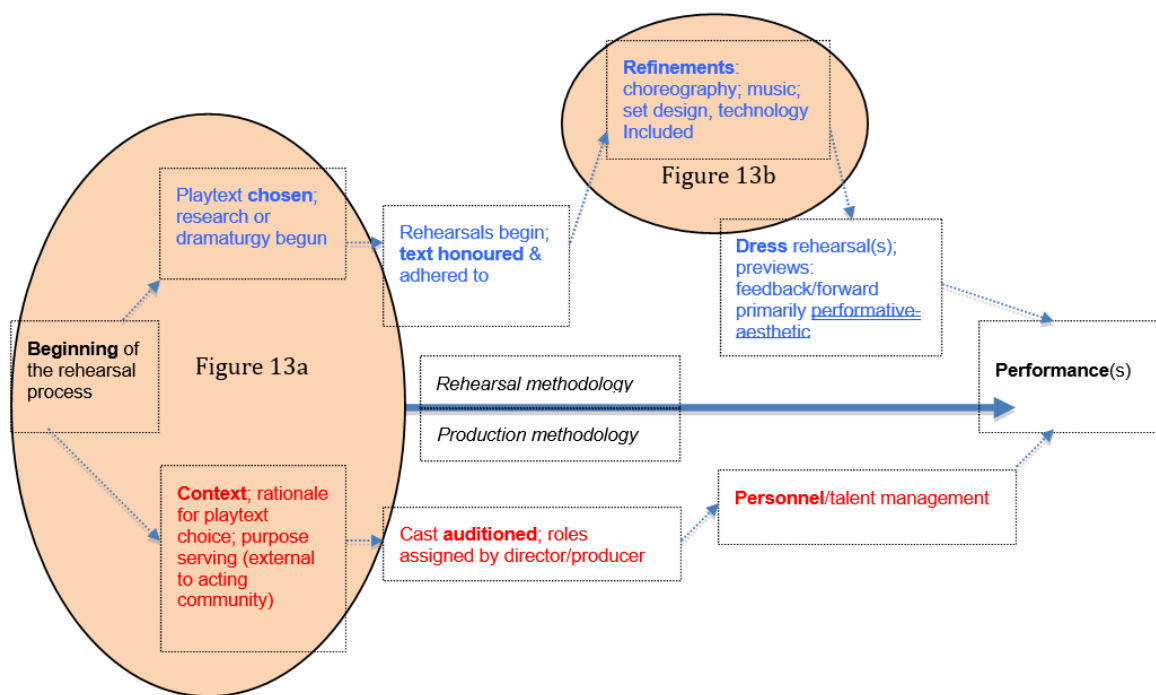


Figure 13. Euro-American *traditional-linear* rehearsal paradigm, with detail

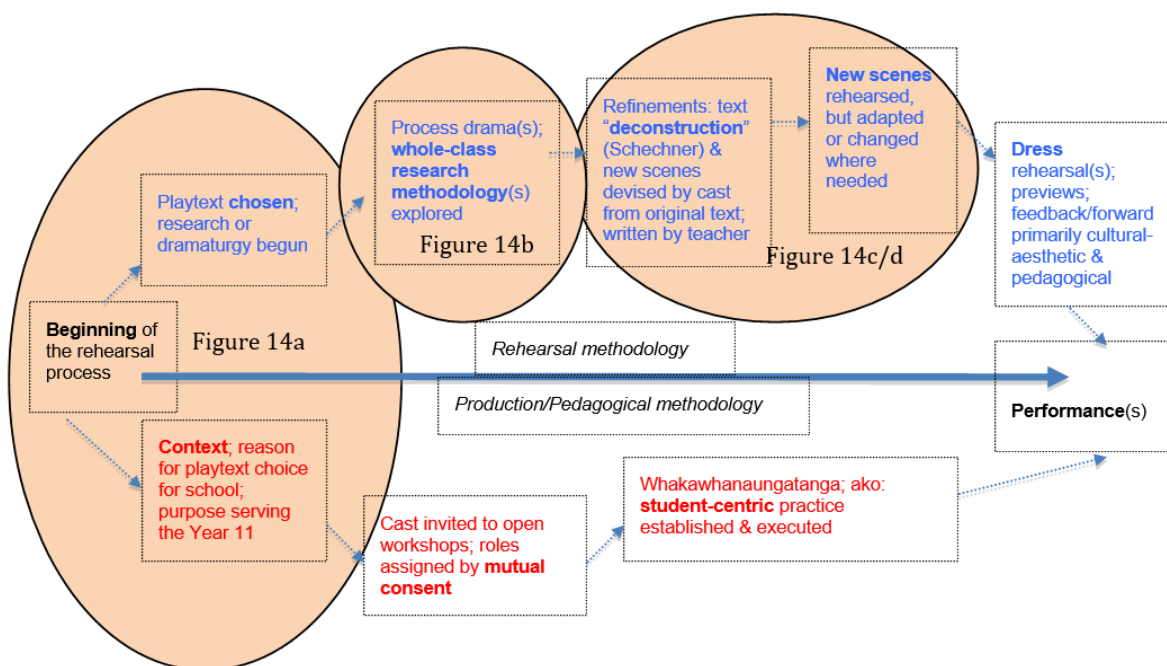


Figure 14. *The Pohutukawa Tree* alternative rehearsal paradigm, with detail

5.16.3 Refinements

The notion of ‘refinements’ is key to both Figure 11/13 and Figure 12/14. In Figure 13 these refinements are quite typical (Figure 13b, p. 114), in theatrical terms, focusing on the inclusion of complex and/or expensive and/or time-consuming elements that complete a rehearsal process as it approaches the performance season: choreography; music to underscore stage action; set design that frames the action; and technology that creates stage effect and impact.

However, what Figure 14 is suggesting as refinements is quite different (Figure 14c) and focused less on how the final production product will be viewed by an audience (external perspective), but rather on what can be created from within the creative participants (actors, directors, researchers et al) as they head towards the mid-point of the process (internal perspective).

Figure 14 is not proposing a process that dismisses the inclusion of such ideas, however, at the same point in the process as Figure 13, as creatives we are more interested in a departure from normal workshop-rehearsal protocol. What eventuates is not possible for all texts, especially those that are still liable for performing rights⁶⁹. As Richard Schechner (1985) wrote:

more recently, many non-Westerners have participated in experimental performance. This has led to the development of intercultural companies and a marvelously complicated exchange of technique and concepts that can no longer be easily located as belonging to this culture or that one. This dialogue relating modern, traditional, and postmodern elements even takes place within single nations... where deep learning takes place, eventuating in artistic works that may not at all look like what they have come from (p. 24).

Schechner’s words prefigure this part of the new process I am proposing in Figure 14, which is a clear departure from the typical form of rehearsal, as seen in Figure 13. The process(es) engaged in by teacher-director and student-actor during the refinement of the play in Figure 14, allow for the students to consider *alternatives*. What is meant by alternatives is a re-

⁶⁹ The estate of Bruce Mason kindly gave permission for this experimentation, and this research, to occur. If a teacher-practitioner were keen to explore other texts it would be advisable to make contact with the rights holders of the text to discuss the feasibility of doing the same. Playmarket NZ, and their agents, would be a good place to begin research and also a conversation: <http://www.playmarket.org.nz/agent>

examination of the play at its core (Figure 14d, p. 114), unpicking the tensions, the context, the characters, and the time and place of the play: its socio-historical context.

Such re-examination, however, is undertaken in order to shed light on the students' lives as they currently live them; to enable them to unpick what it is to live in Aotearoa New Zealand in the 21st Century. The refinements that are undertaken in Figure 14 are therefore focused on "deconstruction" of the original Bruce Mason text of *The Pohutukawa Tree*, and by doing so discovering relevance in the lives of the students today. This aligns with Schechner's statement that "What happens at workshops like this is not only a deconstruction of the text and narrative of the play being done... but also a parallel deconstruction of the lives of the performers" (Schechner, 1985, p. 287).

Through exercises, improvisation, provocations, discussion and rehearsal of ideas – suggested by, and predicated upon, the original Bruce Mason playtext – students come to better understand how they are situated as a young New Zealander.

The fundamental result of such unpicking were suggestions for new scenes, inspired by and/or departing from *The Pohutukawa Tree*. As discussed earlier in the chapter, student-actors were enabled and given agency so that they could propose new scenes taking place in the past, the present or future that reflect the concerns of the original play, whilst also allowing them to explore their concerns as 21st Century New Zealanders. Once these suggestions were made, the teacher-director takes on a third role as writer, shaping these new student-centred ideas into a text that can be rehearsed (Appendix C). Rehearsal then takes place, as in a typical theatrical process, which in turn leads to dress rehearsals and performances of the work in front of an audience⁷⁰. The final performance is crucial, as without an audience to engage in a meaning-making process, and to engage in a discourse with the actors, all the dramatic-theatrical work will have been for nought. As Geertz (1973) stated "Culture is public because meaning is" (p. 12) and "Cultural analysis is (or should be) guessing at meanings, assessing the guesses, and drawing explanatory conclusions from the better guesses" (p. 20). The performance is thus designed to offer the student-actors an opportunity to examine the veracity of the decisions under performance feedback conditions and allows the audience to question their own positionality in light of the student-actors' choices.

⁷⁰ As a unit of in-class assessed NCEA study, students were marked against AS1.6 Perform an acting role.

5.17 Reflections

What my teaching-directing practice taught me, when undertaking the processes that led to *The Pohutukawa Tree*, was that the most damaging creative choice can be to purely focus on the *product*, an arbitrary notion of what a client-audience needs or wants, settled upon long before the director, actors and artistic collaborators become involved in the process of theatre-making. I have worked in institutions where this has been an unstated aim, due to the particular forces at work in that time and place. Even the father of 20th Century experimentation, and research in drama and theatre, Konstantin Stanislavski, could not avoid this fate. After his death in 1938, the Soviet authorities preserved his works for political reasons, only allowing productions to be reproduced based upon his original rehearsal models and books (Benedetti, 1998 & 2000; Mitter, 1992). These products toured the world for thirty years, until aesthetic fashions had changed, and such an approach, and what had become known colloquially as museum piece theatre, had become unpopular.

However, to work solely on *process* without a healthy respect for the moment of organised communion between artist and audience is also potentially damaging to the performance artwork. In an educational context it is finding the balance between these two competing forces, marrying them in such a way as to make them allies and collaborators, seeking out the synergies that allow for efficacious work. Work that is both educationally rich and aesthetically satisfying, for teacher and student, and audience. I have tried to posit here that, through a refining/refined process, I have found a way of marrying my broad knowledge as a theatre practitioner with the distinct knowledges that I possess as a teacher, and the developing expertise in a new country and context, which is eminently replicable in other contexts, and that could greatly benefit my teaching colleagues.

Furthermore, as a teacher-practitioner, a discussion on the issues discussed in these pages is crucial. In Aotearoa New Zealand student teachers on graduate diploma programmes in universities are finding that there are fewer and fewer hours that they share with their academic tutors, exploring the aesthetic as well as class and rehearsal paradigms; one on one class time is being squeezed by budget constraints⁷¹, and in many cases is being replaced with online eLearning options. Thus, learning the nuance of how to structure an appropriate, fit-for-purpose, rehearsal methodology that mitigates in favour of student agency is under pressure.

⁷¹ J. Greenwood, personal communication, July, 2016.

Finally, many schools are now asking that drama teachers provide an extra-curricular musical or play once a year, as a promotional exercise for the school, allowing the school's leadership to champion culture. Beginning teachers, and especially those new to drama, coming from a variety of other curriculum backgrounds, and/or the theatre industry, must realise that a realignment of expectation, process, practice and execution of rehearsal needs to be engineered for the good of all participants.

Chapter 6: On a Thrust Stage, Trying to Break into Bicultural Space

“After”

I stood stock still. Nothing moved, excepting my eyes blinked, my heart beat and my lungs inflated and deflated of their own volition. The closest student was no more than a metre away; the furthest around five metres from me. In total they numbered 20 or thereabouts; but their size, their passion, their energy, their focus was not confined by their number; their synergy was total. I blinked, I beat, I breathed, but as the haka continued, I found my concentration took my mind to another moment in my life. I was seemingly dual-present: conscious of what was happening in the present, whilst at the same time remembering so vividly a haka that had been given to a fallen student at her tangi.

My eyes swelled; tears came. They rested upon my lower eyelid, balanced precariously.

Halfway through, the haka of the present and the haka of my remembered past combined in timing, rhythm, and sound, and the dam of my eyelid broke; tears washed my face, and yet a modest smile chased my lips.

As the climax approached for us all – recipient, actors and audience – the tension grew, broken by the climax of the haka and the rush to embrace the object of their respectful attention.

“Kia ora, matua!” spoke one student.

“Tēnā koe, sir,” said another.

“Tēnā rawa atu koe, matua!” said a third.

“Thanks, sir!” spoke a later student.

Gratitude and heartfelt testimonies were given and gratefully received. Speeches had been made and the haka was the final expression of the graceful tension in the room.

Only days earlier, a testy exchange on Facebook, started by brothers from England, had played out, in which the haka was derided, diminished, demeaned, as it had been in the European press so often. This was especially true of a Rugby World Cup year, of which this was one. A veiled threat of colonialism pervaded the commentary from overseas, angering those who possessed greater sympathy toward (and understanding of) the haka, tikanga and te ao Māori. In myself I felt a tension in the exchange with my brothers in England: after

many years in Aotearoa New Zealand I was trying to become more Kiwi, whilst also recognising my English heritage; I had to forcefully reject something of their position to recognise my own developing understanding of my tūrangawaewae. It was a moment of crisis, and in that crisis, I heard James Ritchie's words directed at those wanting to build and "achieve an authentic bicultural society" in Aotearoa. To do so each person must "go through their own personal process of growth in understanding, and find their own personal Credo too" (Ritchie, 1992, p. 10). This is what was happening to me, and to my students, and to my school community as well – as an artist and teacher how could I create work that reflected my tension and these various perspectives?

6.1 Lights up; cast and audience endowed, in an environmental-experiential opening.

7.20pm. The audience stroll into the performance space, across the threshold of certain steps, up and down, through swagged curtains, and into a performance arena. Gathered in front are characters in their masked finery, attending a party into which the audience are invited, implicated, endowed. Theseus and Hippolyta, the hosts and subjects of the party, will soon appear; but before that moment those gathered drink and make merry. Audible yet discreet, a classical quintet plays music, jovial yet refined, reflecting the attendee's sensibility and class. The lighting is crisp, theatrical and playful: patterned lighting is seen upon the floor, and stark down-lighting creates mood and theatricality, creating spaces to be seen in or hide from. The secrecy suggested by the masks has found a lighting parallel.



Figure 15. The performance space

Further audience members enter and engage momentarily with the cast as they make their way to their seats. The seating configuration is non-normative, with audience arrayed on three sides, thus the audience can watch yet also be seen; the sense of implication in events and endowment as members of a certain community is established. The cultural iconography and design aesthetic are Pākehā, euro-centric and colonial: this place is where power resides: these people are players, power-brokers, the elites. The perception is that their world is the dominant political, economic and cultural force in this (theatrical) universe. However, there is

also something less tangible that nags at the mind: there is a fragility here, a forced quality to the laughter, a hollow confidence in the attendees on stage: will this group's dominance remain unchecked, unchanged for the duration? Will a Pākehā, euro-centric, colonial viewpoint retain its primacy by play's end? Or, might other ways of seeing, doing and being present themselves before the narrative's conclusion?



Figure 16. Guests socialise at the engagement party

6.2 Antecedents: ‘Nick, can you put together an education plan?’

In 2015, Miles Gregory invited me to become a consultant on a newly imagined, embryonic project called Pop-up Globe⁷². My role was specifically focused on education and community outreach, and for Pop-up Globe (PuG) I developed potential approaches to engage schools and the wider community.

⁷² popupglobe.co.nz

6.2.1 PuG + Dean



Figure 17. Pop-up Globe, Auckland

As part of my work, I learned of the productions that were to be staged in that first year, amongst which was a version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with a te ao Māori inflection. This inflection was to be seen in the manner of staging and the use of te reo Māori. The director was to be Rachel House, but she was fortunate enough to be cast in the Disney movie *Moana* (playing Gramma Tala), and so had to step aside from the production. With her stepping down, the prospect of a Māori inflected *A Midsummer Night's Dream* ended, but an idea for a resurrection of sorts began. At the same time as consulting for PuG, I had also been made Māori Dean at my school, responsible for the academic, spiritual and behavioural needs of the 125 students who nominated themselves as Māori. At my interview, it was discussed that although a non-Māori, the Māori board members were keen to embrace Pākehā staff keen to offer solutions to challenges faced by Māori students and school culture. Essentially, I did not have to be Māori to be the Dean of Māori students. This commentary reflected Māori theatre-maker (and social worker) Jim Moriarty's assertion that for "Māori challenges and problems, all those willing to participate in solutions are welcome, regardless of cultural background" (J. Moriarty, personal communication, November 16, 2010).

The coincidence of these two moments – becoming a Dean and working for PuG – allowed me to consider what material I might chose for the 2016 school production, as well as potential aesthetic approaches.

I recognise that I am not to the manor (or manner) born, and non-Māori, but I am possessed of a passion to develop an understanding of, and ability to execute ideas in, te ao Māori,

Maoritanga, and tikanga Māori. My passion is not only driven by my desire to serve my student community successfully, but also by my need to better locate myself as a migrant to Aotearoa New Zealand. During *The Pohutukawa Tree* project, I had experienced epiphanies around how I am positioned, how I see myself as a New Zealander; many of the questions asked of my students in that project were questions I came to ask myself.

The Year 11 work on Bruce Mason's *The Pohutukawa Tree (...Tree)* had established a growing confidence in both myself and my students to play, albeit modestly, in a Māori performative, educational, and aesthetic realm. That confidence manifested in my growing knowledge and practice: both my students and I could play in the aesthetic in the way that we had, whilst also exploring curriculum goals; our resultant experience showed this work to be, arguably, a worthy pursuit. However, this work on *...Tree* was a modest project⁷³ focused within the classroom; it was private, it was limited, it was modestly shared. I recognised that such a project could have its value amplified if constructed (via alternative processes) on a larger scale; but what would be an appropriate vehicle for that project? Might *A Midsummer Night's Dream (...Dream)* be the vehicle?

6.2.2 Shakespeare

Amongst my favourite writers for the stage is William Shakespeare. His work, although 420 years old, still speaks to our modern concerns, be they political, economic, social (Wells, 1990). "What is past is prologue" Antonio in *The Tempest* (Shakespeare, 2011, 2.1.119) reflects, and in this current state of political and social turmoil it is no surprise that Shakespeare and his plays have seen a resurgence in popularity, as we find solace in comparing the present with the past. This notion of Shakespeare as a contemporary voice, allied to his rich, poetical text and a modern notion of the psychology of a character (and characterisation), makes him many writers' favourite writer. Furthermore, contemporary productions of Shakespeare allow us as audiences to experience "the shock of the old", as we recognise how little we have evolved when so much else around us has changed (M. Gregory, personal communication, July 4, 2015). Shakespeare is also revered within the Māori performance community, as Jim Moriarty said, "The Globe Theatre in London is the wharenui of English drama and theatre. The Whaikorero that happens in that place is similar to what happens on the marae" (J. Moriarty, personal communication, February 10, 2009).

⁷³ N=24.

This was also reflected by Matua T⁷⁴ who stated that “the image base of Shakespeare’s language closely resembles the conventions of Whaikorero in te ao Māori” (Matua T, personal communication, August 16, 2016). Moriarty also stated that “there’s got to be a place for all contributors,” and for Māori cultural practices to survive and thrive within a theatrical context then it “has to become more flexible, more open to the contemporary modern world and influences.” However, teachers and directors (and participants) “have to be respectful” (Matua T, personal communication, August 16, 2016).

The observations of both Moriarty and Matua T gave me confidence that an aesthetic conversation between these two contrasting worlds – te ao Shakespeare and te ao Māori – might be possible.

I must state, however, that I had not always been a fan of Shakespeare. As a lower middle-class London child, I had grown up seeing Shakespeare as an icon belonging to the classes above me, enshrined in heavily corporate-sponsored organisations such as the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC). In these RSC productions I saw “ideas which express the interests of the dominant class of society”, as well as a “dominant ideology which operates in the interests of such ruling classes” (Kershaw, 1992, p. 19). As a young, agitating theatre-maker, I did not see Shakespeare (or work derived from his texts) as a change maker, as in my experience he was positioned as an embodiment of English heritage, where great art or culture is dead, fixed, immutable. That all changed in 1993. In that year, I visited the National Theatre, who had invited the Quebecois theatre maker Robert Lepage to direct *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Lepage’s production was a revelation, in that he disregarded any previous history of the text, approaching it as a new play, using his distinctive lens and perspective. The production incorporated physical theatre, circus arts, a radically symbolic set design and an irreverence that peeled away the musty accretion of previous productions, revealing a sinewy, poetic, troubling play that was alive and felt “more real than the normal stream of consciousness.” “The theatre is the arena where a living confrontation can take place” (Brook, 1968, p. 111-112), and this is what was happening: a confrontation between historical-normative expectations of a Shakespeare play with a contemporary, non-normative reading.

⁷⁴ Matua T (Ngati Kahungunu) was the Māori Cultural Advisor on ...*Dream*.



Figure 18. Lepage's *...Dream* at the National Theatre

As I drew breath at the play's conclusion, I was reminded of Brook's (1968) assertion that "I know of one acid test in the theatre... When a performance is over, what remains?" (p. 152). What remained was a sense that I had experienced a piece of "immediate" theatre, that was direct, compelling, authentic, truthful, fresh, and vital (Brook, 1968). It had made me and my generation of young theatre-makers reconsider how a playtext could be manipulated to reflect contemporary concerns and aesthetic ambitions, in much the same way that Brook's 1970 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* had also once done.

6.2.3 Why a *te ao Māori* inflected Shakespeare?

This was just such a reinforcing experience; a positive reinforcement of my culture, of Māoritanga. It is a reaction and rejection of the dominant art of the 1990s when I was growing up: Māori theatre was all about violence, as seen from the viewpoint of the angry young man. The tough man mentality, addiction, baby deaths – it was the dominant discourse of the time (Matua T, personal communication, August 16, 2016).

The great thing about the production was that not only was it a terrific reinforcement of my culture (and of biculturalism), but that it was based in these old pieces of English writing. It felt like colonisation backwards! (Matua T, personal communication, August 16, 2016).

These responses (above) from my primary collaborator on ...*Dream*, Matua T, came at the end of the process, and were heartening to hear. However, Shakespeare was not an immediate choice for the project that became ...*Dream*, and no particular outcome had been prefigured. Other writers, Kiwi, Pasifika and tangata whenua, were initially considered, who wrote in te reo and/or English. A good example of such writing was *Romeo and Tusi* by Oscar Kightley and Erolia Ifopo. However, what Shakespeare offered was a rich legacy (around the world) of post-colonial productions, which interrogated the past and present of emergent nations. In post-colonial Africa, Shakespeare has been a well-used writer, allowing theatre-makers and audiences to “subvert the racist ideology by allowing Shakespeare’s plays to resonate in a South African context” (Quince, 2000, p. 7).

However, there is not universal comfort in Aotearoa New Zealand for such post-colonial approaches. Christian Penney from Toi Whakaari, the New Zealand Drama School, stated that

I think these sorts of settings work, however, the overt nature of this sort of endeavour to some degree lessens the potential impact of the text, I would imagine. You may have used the outward symbols of Māori arts, but my question is to what degree the thinking and development of these was integrated into a Māori framework (C. Penney, personal communication, February 9, 2009).

The success of African theatre artists, working with and through Shakespeare, was found in the way that they

mimicked their colonial masters and echoed their praise of Shakespeare; at other times they challenged the cultural authority of both Shakespeare and colonial regimes... they appropriated Shakespeare as their comrade in anti-colonial arms by offering new interpretations and adaptations of his work” (Loomba & Orkin, 1998, p. 2).

In Canada and Australia, similar productions were undertaken, in order to examine new post-war and post-colonial national cultural identities (Gilbert & Tompkins, 1996; Loomba & Orkin, 1998; Schaffeld, 2005). In Aotearoa New Zealand there have been some modest post-colonial theatrical experiments with Shakespeare, reflecting Neil’s (1998) assertion that

The business of New Zealand Shakespeare... is not merely to give the plays a local accent but to realise their inescapably local dimension... this means effecting the kinds of cultural translation necessary to remove the play from the pieties of the ‘universal’ stage... and to place them in the historically charged arena (p. 149).

Through my imagined process and collaboration with Matua T, I hoped for “a process of cultural exchange based on mutual respect and sympathy” (Balme, 1999, p. 272), which might be a strong exemplar of Balme’s (1999) “syncretic theatre”:

Syncretic theatre is one of the most effective means to decolonise the stage, because it utilises all the performance forms of both the European and indigenous cultures in a creative recombination of their elements, without slavish adherence to one tradition or the other (p. 2).

6.2.4 Māori Dean

My new role as Māori Dean also informed my choice of play text, as it would speak to my community of care, as had previous work in a bicultural educational-aesthetic field (Brown, 2010), at my former schools. At these schools I had become an adherent to the bicultural and multicultural benefits of the Te Kotahitanga project (Bishop, 2005).

Also influencing my decision making was my current school’s strategic plan and item #2: “developing bicultural practice in a multicultural context.”

School Strategic Plan, #2:

School will improve the wellbeing of *all* students and staff by making the school more welcoming to its many cultures, by making it a genuinely bicultural institution, and by increasing *all* students’ sense of belonging:

- The cultural competencies of ako, whanaungatanga, tangata whenuatanga, manaakitanga and wānanga, which emphasise partnership, community and belonging, will underpin all of our teaching and learning and interactions with our communities;
- We will have a genuinely bicultural ethos and physical environment, and will begin to develop a plan for a school marae;

- We will be a school that reviews itself consistently against our bicultural and multicultural priorities to ensure that we increasingly reflect our diverse community;
- Teachers will have the ongoing support through their professional development programmes to ensure that the school can, over time, become a genuinely bicultural institution within a multicultural environment (School Strategic Plan, 2015-18)

Such aims are lofty but achievable for a school such as ours, however, they need teachers to embrace them and find ways of making them manifest; ...*Dream* could be one such avenue. Furthermore, in a school with a predominantly Pākehā and Asian-New Zealand student community, the concerns of tangata whenua can easily be overlooked.

An exercise that informed both my role as Māori Dean and my work on the process and product of what became *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, was to invite as many of the students who nominate themselves as Māori to complete a questionnaire (Appendix D). There were 11 questions in total, but I will unpack responses to just three, questions 2, 6 and 8, as these were most relevant. Question 2 asked “Can we (the school) please ask how you see yourself as a young Māori adult: how connected are you to your Marae, whānau, iwi/hapu or elements of te ao Māori and Māoritanga?” (Brown, 2016). Of the sixty respondents⁷⁵ 95% stated that ‘yes, they felt connected’, but 5% said they felt ‘less so’. Of those that answered yes, these students listed experiences such as tangi and whānau get-togethers at which they felt a clear sense of whakawhanaungatanga. Of the three students stating less so, all described how they were embarrassed by their lack of knowledge of te reo and te ao Māori, and this led to them feeling ‘disconnected’ from a culture they wanted to become better engaged with, connecting to friends and whānau. Question 6 asked “In a class in which Māori students are thriving what does the class culture look like?” (Brown, 2016). Respondents described how the class looks ‘loud’ and how there is a ‘strong connection between people, especially peers’. How there was more ‘chat and humour than quiet’, and that students are treated as a ‘community’ rather than isolated as individuals. A description was given of how the class is ‘interactive, physical and hands-on’, and how ‘student welfare is more important than the material being studied’, which indicated ‘care’ on the part of the teacher.

⁷⁵ The Māori student cohort in 2016 was around 125.

In Question 8 I asked, “What staples (or elements) of good teaching are evident when a class is supporting and successfully nurturing Māori students?” (Brown, 2016). To this the response was simple, in that the teacher provided a ‘strong visual element’, ‘inspiration to learn something new’ and a desire by the teacher ‘to develop and show mutual respect’.

On a final note, five Māori students observed that support of Māori students in a way that enabled them to achieve as Māori was inconsistent and depended very much on the teacher. These students commented that the ‘kind of support and nurturing needed’ was regularly ‘evident in sports contexts’, whilst it ‘was lacking in the classroom’. This data was doubly useful: as I engaged with my new Dean role, with responsibility for teaching my colleagues how to engage in a culturally-responsive manner (Bishop, 2001), I communicated the importance of biculturalism in the lives of our Māori students, and the benefits to the student body as a whole. However, at the same time, I was considering how I could further engage the school community of staff and students by not just talking-instructing, but by walking-constructing a bicultural performance piece that aspired to be both good school drama and theatre that was also educationally sound and aesthetically satisfying.

6.3 Pedagogical-Philosophical differences and aims

Firstly, there’s a clear difference between the ambition and focus of the two projects. Project #1 (*The Pohutukawa Tree*) allowed students and teacher to modestly explore students’ developing notion of identity and the aesthetic, within the relative safety of a class context. However, Project #2 would encourage students to take greater risks in potentially embodying a bicultural identity, and then sharing that with an audience of 400 each night. This would be crucial, for it would be in the engagement, reception and response of each audience that the students would measure the success of their meaning-making process, a process that was nurtured within the isolated greenhouse of workshop and rehearsal.

In regards of the choice of play for Project #2, the dramaturgical structure of ...*Dream* (in this context, the internal mechanics of the play) was a primary reason for the play’s choice. Having directed the play before, I was keenly aware of how the play’s social grouping structures, and the dynamic tensions between these groups, might lend itself to an interpretation that would enable me to explore my research question further, dramatically. I will not give a synopsis of the play here, but it is important to know that the play is divided into three distinct groupings:

- the Court of Duke Theseus, which also includes in its ranks the four Lovers – Hermia, Lysander, Demetrius and Helena. The Court is specifically euro-centric in nature, te ao Pākehā in character, reflected in its rules and social mores, which privilege order, hierarchy, function and control. The production of ...*Dream* began with an engagement party for Theseus and his betrothed, Hippolyta, and the audience entered the theatre space shared with the actors. This endowed the audience as guests at the party, as they crossed the acting space and found their seats, and then watched on. Endowing the audience was an effective way of establishing the rules and mores and building a tension that would play between the Court and the woodland realm;
- the woodland or fairy realm, which is dominated by Oberon, king of the fairies, his servant Puck, and his partner, Titania, and her coterie of fairies. The woodland realm contrasts with the world of the court in that it is open, free, and not controlled by Oberon or Titania but rather carefully and gently managed. Oberon and Titania see themselves as kaitiaki or guardians, and their roles are a privilege; they are not born into privilege. The way that this world, te ao Māori, functions stands in direct contrast – and under tension – to that of the Court and te ao Pākehā;
- the Mechanicals, who are a group of artisans from Athens, who (in the original text) are also an amateur acting troupe. They are the bringers of chaos, transgressing the rules of both te ao Pākehā (the Court) and te ao Māori (the woodland realm) as they enter and exit them. In this production it was decided that the Mechanicals would be reimagined as a touring Commedia dell ‘Arte troupe, for curriculum, dramatic and aesthetic purposes.

Further differentiating itself from Project #1, ...*Dream* would not result in brand new scenes, devised by the students and written by the teacher. Rather, Project #2 would enable the text to be examined forensically at the point of its dramaturgical tensions, resulting in new performative bicultural acts, in sympathy with Shakespeare’s text. These performative bicultural acts would be recognisable to a contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand audience, reflecting the tensions between the different social groupings and securely locating the production as uniquely Kiwi.

As a teacher, an aesthete, and a researcher – as well as an individual in search of his own New Zealand identity – having one foot in a theatrical culture and heritage that I recognised (Shakespeare) whilst attempting to place my other foot in a new way of being, seeing and knowing (biculturalism, tikanga Māori and te ao Māori) was crucial. I needed a familiar

aesthetic platform that would allow me to navigate the complex structures that would ultimately help myself and my students to consider their emergent positionality and sense of locatedness.

6.4 Teaching & learning through drama & theatre: position, identity and curriculum

It is worth restating my research question here and underlining this project's relevance to that question:

How can a drama teacher develop new dramatic-performative work that engages teacher, student and community with the aesthetic, develops social curiosity, at the same time that it meets curriculum goals?

In this next project, I aspired to build upon the embryonic classwork of *The Pohutukawa Tree* and investigate as many of the factors in the question as possible. With my cast and Māori Cultural Advisor (Matua T), I aimed to reinterpret Shakespeare's play through multiple performative lenses: te ao Māori and tikanga, te ao Pākehā as well as the convention of physical theatre. Processes to enable this exploration would have to be devised, but once in place would allow for students to explore lesser seen expressions of te ao Māori and tikanga, and the positive interplay between the two worlds and the "tensiveness" (Bacon, 1979) between them:

Tensiveness refers to those competing impulses that give any performative situation dynamism, a push and pull-but not a tension as in friction or strife, but the actions of those elements and attributes of social relations that either maintains social systems or seek to transform them (Bacon, cited in Alexander, 2005, p. 420).

Although not utilising Achievement Standards to assess and measure student work, it was hoped that the production would reflect the ambitions of the front end of *The New Zealand Curriculum* (NZC; MoE, 2007) and the Arts Curriculum (MoE, 2000), allowing both myself and my students room to play, explore and manipulate curriculum goals.

As I have detailed in my methodology chapter (Chapter 4), as a teacher I consider myself as someone with a strong interest in exploring and developing a stage aesthetic, having worked professionally as a theatre maker. Manipulating and playing with the aesthetic is fascinating to me; marrying this activity to my still developing philosophy as an arts educator in Aotearoa New Zealand is part of my current, holistic development. Post ...*Tree* I reflected on

my work with Year 11 on curriculum and with the aesthetic and specifically the new rehearsal methodologies that had eventuated to accommodate new intellectual-creative departures. A profound realisation was that the class-bound work with Year 11 had shown itself to have value, and a broader application of the lessons learned through that process might prove fruitful for a larger community audience.

6.4.1 Initial, key processes

Student A: “Oh my God, my role is a Māori fairy king!”

Student AK: “I was worried that in the te ao Māori parts of the play we might not do it right and offend the audience.”

Student E: “My family laughed at me when I revealed that I was to be a Māori queen, but I have always tried to say the language correctly.”

Staff member BS: “I am not sure how this will work!”

Mary: “...*Dream* was in microcosm a theatrical version of what the All Blacks do: a Haka and then a European game, which is quite binary in nature.”

Matua T: “...the representation of te ao Māori in theatre of the 90s was all about violence. You can see this in aspects of *Woman Far Walking* and the voice of the ‘angry young man’; in *Once Were Warriors* which epitomised the ‘tough man’ mentality. It was a theatre consumed with addiction and baby deaths; it was the Māori discourse of the time.”⁷⁶

The quotes above are from collaborators, staff and students, who worked on the processes that brought our shared vision of ...*Dream* to the stage, in July 2016. After the production was over, I interviewed them to gain insight into the hidden world of their thinking; I called these interviews Conversations with Critical Friends, and you will find their commentary at intervals across the chapter. You can also find transcripts of these interviews in Appendix E, F and G. The most crucial of these critical friends was to be Matua T, who, after responding to an advert in early 2016, joined the school staff as a Māori Cultural Advisor on the production. Matua T’s creative base is Te Pou Theatre in New Lynn, Auckland. Te Pou Theatre Company⁷⁷ is a “new Māori theatre space located in Portage Road New Lynn, that

⁷⁶ All quotes are from personal communication, August 16, 2016.

⁷⁷ <http://tepoutheatre.nz/>

embodies the literal meaning of its name ‘*The Support post*’; acting as a constant and reliable presence for our performing arts community in Tāmaki Makaurau⁷⁸ and abroad.”

6.4.2 Collaboration between te ao Māori and te ao Pākehā

Although confident in my directing ability, I knew it would be essential to include the voice of tangata whenua when approaching telling a story of Māori. I am aware of my shortcomings, one of which is over-confidence, which can lead to missteps and accidental insult. As Smith (2000) positioned, I needed to be a researcher who was able “to show respect for the Māori by exhibiting a willingness to listen, to be humble, to be cautious, to avoid flaunting knowledge, and to avoid trampling over the *mana* of people” (p. 242). At a pragmatic level, Matua T would be the man who could keep me to this plan, as I am writing after all “as a privileged Westerner. At the same time, however, I seek to be an ‘allied other’” (Kaomea, 2004, p. 32; Mutua & Swadener, 2004, p. 4). My alliance was to be one predicated on a recognition that Māori performative art forms would have to be the equal to any Western forms used in the production, an alliance that recognised Denzin’s (2006) assertion that “there is a need for a greater Māori involvement in research. Kaupapa Māori research is culturally safe and relevant, and it involves the mentorship of Māori” (p. 944). In this project, however, the mentorship would be two-way and mutual, in that I would provide epistemological and performative perspectives on Shakespeare and education, whilst Matua T would reciprocate towards myself and the students with epistemologies concerning te ao Māori, tikanga and Māori performative art forms.

6.4.3 Collaboration between myself and Matua T

During the production processes, the relationship that I developed with Matua T was one that was respectful, positive, process-driven and yet also outcome-focused; Matua T kindly commented on the “good nature” of the cast, Mary and myself during the process (Matua T, personal communication, August 16, 2016). However, the relationship was – at least at the beginning – somewhat troubling to me personally. My concerns at the outset were numerous. On a macrocosmic level, I was keenly aware that I was a Pākehā New Zealander, working within a predominantly euro-centric institution, and that I was setting out the terms of engagement explicitly, before I had invited a Māori collaborator to work with me. I had chosen the play, I had cast the actors, and the background noise of my institution’s bias and

⁷⁸ The Māori name for the Auckland region.

expectations were evident and remained un-addressed. Matua T would have no influence over these facets coming into the process as (relatively) late as he did. There is also some white, or liberal guilt at play here, as my position within the relationship is one of broker and arbiter from a position of institutional and positional power, seemingly reinforcing (neo)colonial attitudes, the very attitudes that I am trying to address and combat in the processes undertaken in order to render ...*Dream* into some sense, for a contemporary New Zealand audience.

On a microcosmic level, I am the creative-aesthetic arbiter who has specifically chosen the scenes in the play that will be approached using a tikanga Māori methodology, with Matua T giving counsel. Again, I have muted the voice of tangata/mana whenua by making initial choices without consultation. Reflecting on this decision, I am cognisant that the resources of time and space are limited, and so certain decisions had to be made in advance, in order to complete a product by a given deadline.

However, I feared that I was representing what Smith (2012) described as a school and drama culture that “constantly reaffirms the West’s view of itself as the centre of legitimate knowledge, the arbiter of what counts as knowledge and the source of ‘civilized’ knowledge” (p. 66). After all, “Indigenous peoples want to tell our own stories, write our own versions, in our own ways, for our own purposes” (p. 29). However, if I did not hold fast to the ambition and initial ideas of the project, then it might never exist at all. To mediate my concerns, I kept addressing Smith’s (2012) “critical questions”, whenever I came to a challenging decision:

In contemporary indigenous contexts there are some major research issues which continue to be debated quite vigorously. These can be summarised best by the critical questions that communities and indigenous activists often ask, in a variety of ways. Whose research is it? Who has designed its questions and framed its scope? Who will carry it out? Who will write it up? How will its results be disseminated? (p. 10)

As I answered each of Smith’s questions, I recognised that the research will be mostly undertaken by me, but with invited participation by Matua T and the students. That the design, especially in the te ao Māori facets, will foreground Matua T’s voice and knowledge, as much as was practicable. That the research execution will be by *all* the creative individuals involved. However, the writing and dissemination moves beyond Smith’s imagined frame, as the “Who will write it up” becomes both the performance of ...*Dream* and the writing of the

PhD thesis, and that the dissemination will occur twice, through the production/performances to an audience, and publication and presentation of research.

In the rehearsal room, the relationship between myself and Matua T was professional and focused. The general manner of our collaboration (Figure 19) was founded upon a cycle of Intention-Scene-Tikanga (Methodology)-Rehearsal-Performance-Review, which was a functional and successful process. Once the general approach had been mastered it became very useful when applying the cycle to specific moments of performance, in this instance (Figure 20) the final ritual at the end of the play. In this ritual, I wanted to create a poetic stage moment that could encapsulate Shakespeare's intention found in his dialogue and matching it with an invented tikanga. The lines of dialogue, "With this field dew consecrate" (Shakespeare, 2003, 5.1.405), suggested a cleansing or baptismal practice, for which Matua T and I worked on a spiritual-ceremonial-embodied stage activity, the aesthetic creation and execution of which is discussed elsewhere in the chapter.

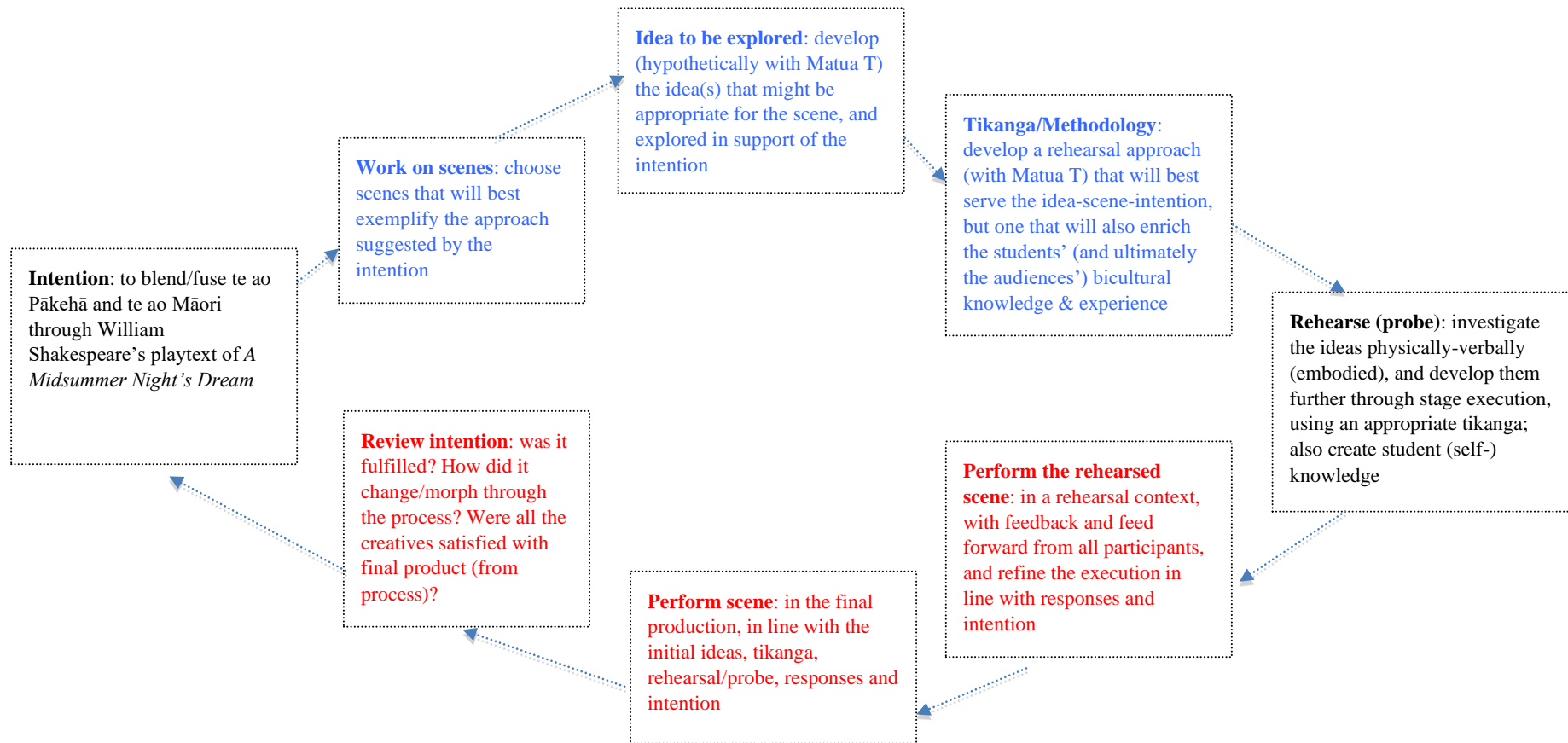


Figure 19. *General manner of collaboration in rehearsal and performance: a model exemplifying collaboration between Matua T¹ & the author*

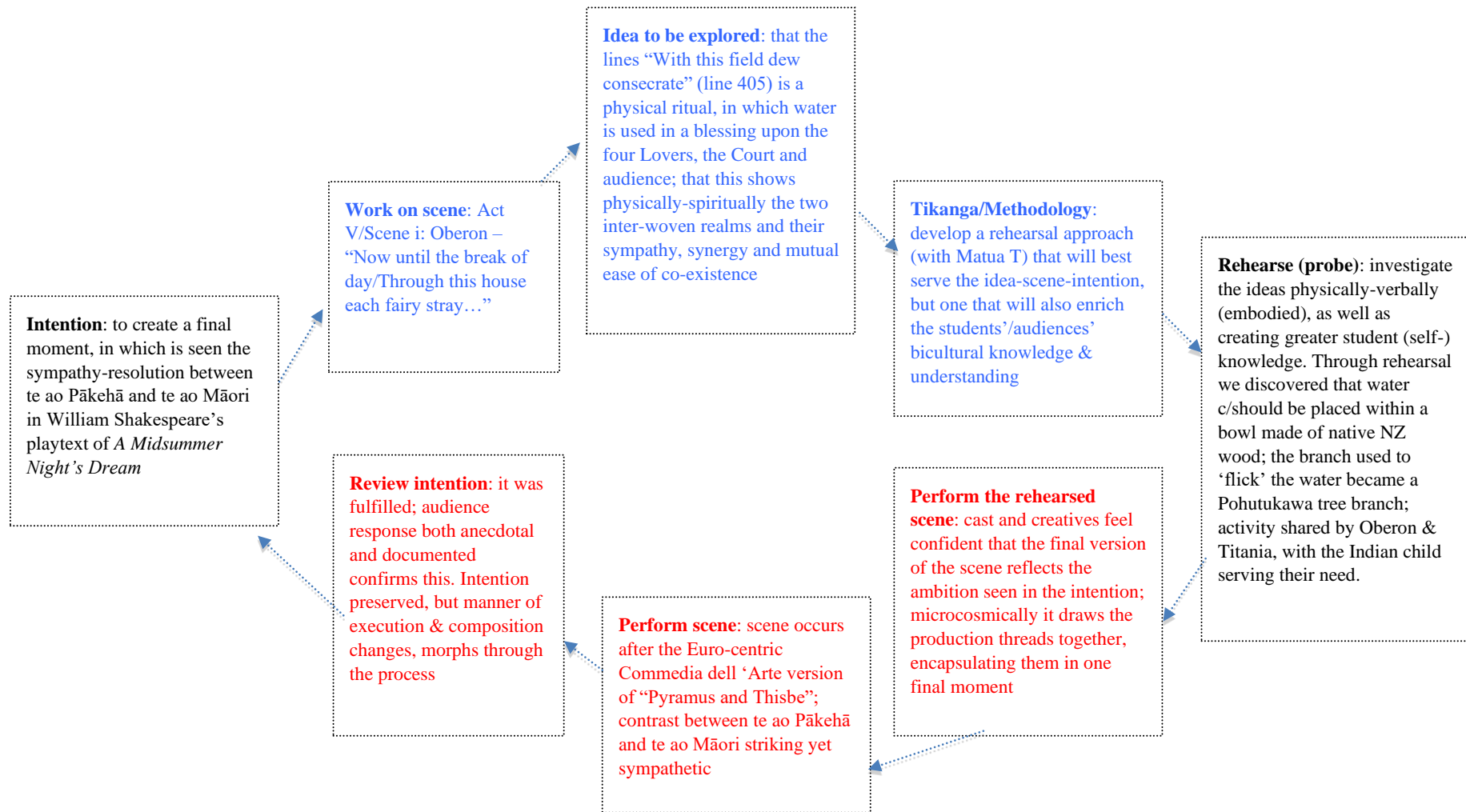


Figure 20. *Specific example of collaboration in rehearsal and performance*

6.5 Tikanga



Figure 21. Titania and Oberon hongi

I remember that there was a definite shift after the first rehearsal. It started with the mihimihi, a karakia, and then working with them (the students). However, post-rehearsal three students⁷⁹ approached me to give me a hongi goodbye; now that's the first 'crack', of trying to get into that Māori world. I think that's great. They're trying to get more, trying to connect to this Māori world (Matua T, personal communication, August 16, 2016).

A production ambition, workshops, rehearsals, developing processes that mitigate in favour of positive performance outcomes – none of these aspects are scientific certainties that will lead to an effective performance product; each is an uncertain departure. However, engaging Matua T as a Cultural Advisor, a kaumatua⁸⁰ was an important step for me, and for the production, and would begin to allow for what Denzin (2006) calls “radically transforming the colonizing encounter” where pedagogies and aesthetic approaches are formulated that “imagine postcolonial societies that honour difference and promote healing” (p. 944). Even though as a director I am aware of the complexities around issues of biculturalism, Te Tiriti o Waitangi, te ao Māori and tangata whenua, I felt it crucial that a member of the Auckland community who was tangata whenua should take on a parallel role, alongside me as director. Matua T's role nominally was to advise the director, the designers and the cast, and help shape Māori performative elements in response to the productions

⁷⁹ All three students were of a different ethnic origin: a Pākehā, a Sri-Lankan New Zealander, and a Cook Island-Māori.

⁸⁰ A revered elder, or in this case a revered specialist in Māori performative arts.

stated philosophical ambition. Central to this was developing a tikanga, a customary practice, a methodology and way of working, in workshop and rehearsal, that would honour all participants, and the bicultural workshops and creative work that eventuated.

At the heart of ...*Dream* was an aesthetic and pedagogical ambition to introduce the students to new ways of engaging with and seeing the world. A way of seeing (Berger, 1972) that privileges the bicultural nature of our nation and alerts the participants (students; teachers; audience) to alternative perspectives on the relationship between Māori and Pākehā, and by extension a reconsideration of all functional (multicultural) relationships. I approached this ambition, however, with caution, as not all tangata whenua⁸¹ speak with one voice. In fact, no iwi presumes to speak for Māori in broader national terms; the unique identity of Māori, tangata whenua and/or mana whenua is rooted in specific regional locales (Barlow, 2002; Silich, 2010)⁸². Matua T would help this production and its creative participants by creating a foundation from which we all could, through performative acts, speak to our community, in this specific location.

Matua T and I agreed that using tikanga as a method for engaging with the Māori facets of production would be the most ethical and efficacious way to proceed. Tikanga is defined by Mead (2003) as a “Body of knowledge and customary practices carried out characteristically by communities” (p. 15), and therefore must be embedded in a process in a culturally responsive way. For me to proceed as a Pākehā with no thought to discuss with, or defer to, a Māori colleague would be a flawed decision, reflecting what Bishop (2006) described as “a tradition of research into Māori people’s lives that addresses concerns and interests of the predominantly non-Māori researchers’ own making, as defined and made accountable in terms of the researchers’ own cultural worldview(s)” (p. 100). It was essential that my worldview (and local view) were mediated by someone who was tangata whenua.

The tikanga for ...*Dream* would be two-fold: a tikanga that already existed in te ao Māori and would be executed in support of the process, and tikanga that we as directors and a cast would invent and co-create. The former would be familiar to many in Aotearoa New Zealand: mihimihi, karakia, powhiri, whaikorero and the hongi. However, the latter gave me pause and sleepless nights, and it would only be mediation by Matua T that gave the participants confidence and a sense of appropriateness.

⁸¹ Tangata whenua are the first nations peoples of Aotearoa New Zealand.

⁸² Personal communication, August 8, 2010.

6.5.1 Tikanga and theatrical conceit

Kershaw (1992) asserts that a production, such as one undertaken in a school, hopes “to generate an ideological identity of a *local* community (through rhetorical conventions) in relation to a *regional* history” (p. 161), and that the success of such a production is predicated upon “the usefulness of a performance to the particular contexts” (p. 59) in which it was devised and executed. Such productions and performances aim “to identify with the community” and “address real needs” by asking “questions of the community’s values and beliefs” (p. 61). In the final analysis, “theatre should aim primarily to become an expression of the community for which it works” (Hilton, 1979).

To fulfil our desire to locate our dramatic-theatrical work specifically here in bicultural Aotearoa New Zealand, in Tamaki-Makaurau (Auckland), on the North Shore and in the Westlake community, we undertook to adapt tikanga in such a way as to give it a distinct local specificity. The enabling of this conceit was experienced in the first moment in which te ao Māori was seen and heard in ...*Dream*, in the clash between Titania, her fairies and Oberon (Figure 22).



Figure 22. The confrontation

The context for this scene is one of anger and distrust between two lovers (Titania and Oberon), whose personal fight has resulted in regional climate change: “And thorough this distemperature we see/The seasons alter” (Shakespeare, 2003, 2.1.91-92). This moment between the two lovers was to be the first action that would be Māori-centric, and it was crucial that we assert the conventions of engagement for the audience. The relevance of the action and moment had to draw the audience towards the pedagogical and aesthetic ambition of the directors and cast. As Kershaw (1992) observes, the audience has “a *choice* as to whether or not the performance may be efficacious for

them” (p. 28), as it follows that if the “spectator decides that the performance is of central significance to her or his ideology then such choice implies a commitment” (p. 29). This moment suggests a “possible world” (p. 29) that we, as the aesthetic arbiters, are asking our audience to agree to, and by doing so establishing how they might engage with the rest of the play.

To construct this moment, I nervously shared with Matua T my thoughts on the tensions in the scene, the objectives of each character, and the sense, the quality of the interaction between the two rival groups. I also described Arnold Manaaki Wilson’s (Greenwood & Wilson, 2006) notion of “Pakeaka”, and its potential application here in this moment of tension and possible outcome:

The term Pakeaka relates to the threat of conflict. It refers to that stage of conflict when two war parties have come together but then stop and take each other’s measure before entering combat. They back off and re-assess each other’s strength. This backing off period is called Pakeaka... there is time, before taking action, to think again. There is the possibility of a completely different outcome. It is that little space of possibility that has been created that is called Pakeaka (p. 5-6).

Complicating matters, I explained to Matua T how I was also keen to use the dramatic convention of physical theatre as a storytelling partner. Cognisant of the elusive nature of the elusory-poetical language of Oberon and Titania (and the woodland realm) to some audience members, I had decided that if I reinforced textual meaning with physical activity that prefigured, mirrored or paralleled the text then language that was hard to follow might be understood through symbolic or semiotic means. Matua T liked this idea but was unsure how the two approaches might blend.

At a workshop designed to approach this scene, Matua T began with a mihimihi and a karakia, and followed this with a whaikorero about Shakespeare’s relationship to te ao Māori. He discussed the richness of Shakespeare’s language and its allusions, metaphors and poetry, properties that could also be seen and heard on the marae during a formal powhiri. Latterly, I learned that this approach did not initially win over the students, as one student (W) described communicating “scepticism” to his parents after that initial rehearsal. Another student (M) revealed that they felt that the approach was “unlikely to work” either generally or specifically; but fortunately, these students kept these concerns to themselves (personal communication, August 18, 2016).

This first workshop, which blended into later workshops and rehearsals, looked at the initial moment of confrontation between the two rival groups: Oberon and Puck versus Titania and her fairies. In keeping with the contrast to the Pākehā realm of the court, the fairy realm was directed to avoid geometric shape and movement, for example straight lines and consistent height level. The fairies moved in concentric circles (in the theatre space), as one might see in the natural shape of the

koru (Figure 23) as they approached their rivals; this was at the suggestion of Matua T. Their various levels or heights were also directed in such a way to give a three-dimensional sense of the Koru (Figure 22).



Figure 23. A Koru, prior to flowering into a fern

To further root the fairies in te ao Māori and tikanga, the fairies were directed to enter the performance space on the diagonal, whilst performing a keening cry of the karanga, as the fairies recognised the presence of Oberon and the acknowledgement of “Wehi” and the need to lay down the “Wero”. “Wehi is the effect that one person’s power and influence has on another. One person recognises the superior power and influence of another in comparison with his or her own” (Barlow, 2002, p. 161). In this context, both Oberon and Titania attempted to assert their Wehi. Wero “is a ritual practice which is watched with awe and anticipation by onlookers... The first part of the ceremony consists of sending forth three warriors to challenge the group” (Barlow, 2002, p. 164). In *...Dream*, these warriors were sent in the guise of fairies. The karanga was taught to the fairies by Matua T, along with wiri and pūkana. The wiri, a tremulous hand movement like a micro-wave, expressed the energy and spirit of the collected fairies and their determination (in this context) to be seen as individuals and not as an adjunct to Oberon. The pūkana was adopted by numerous fairies to intimidate and assert autonomy and tino rangatiratanga, or self-determination. Student E⁸³, as a non-Māori student, was initially “circumspect” in her use of the pūkana in her role as Titania. Her family initially “laughed at her” when she revealed she was to play the role, and this did colour her initial engagement with the process (personal communication, August 18, 2016).

⁸³ Student E was born in Aotearoa New Zealand to first-generation Irish migrants.



Figure 24. Titania (standing) expresses her autonomy and independence with a pūkana

However, when interviewed post-production, student E revealed that the gentle, encouraging manner of the rehearsal process allowed her to access her own “empathy and sensitivity” which in turn “allowed her to enter Titania”. In fact, the pūkana, which had once been so “alien” to her at first, had, by the end of the process and production, become “part of her essential being”. It was her *hack* that enabled her to enter a Māori-centric way of thinking, doing, and viewing the world of te ao Māori she needed to be fully engaged in (personal communication, August 18, 2016).

What was also evident in the moment between Oberon and Titania was the clash of not only two rival groups but two rival sexes, male and female. Matua T and I realised that it was crucial that equality between the sexes must also be a key element of the interaction, and that neither of the two groups should be allowed dominance due to their sex. To help that young women who played fairies to feel that they could rival and match their male counterpoints we began to call them wāhine, the collective noun for women.

In response to the powerful entry of the wāhine, and their assertion of dominance, Matua T worked with the actors playing Oberon and Puck closely. To set up the tension needed for Pakeaka to work, Matua T had the two actors playing Oberon and Puck perform an adapted version of the school haka. Actions and words were adapted to account for the specific context, language and tension of the moment, with Oberon and Puck starting their response just after the wāhine began to karanga. Both groups then finished in the same moment and paused allowing for Pakeaka, which was clearly felt; a cultural aesthetic was tangible to the audience. After a pause for the Pakeaka had been given

the dialogue between Oberon and Titania began, “Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania” (Shakespeare, 2003, 2.1.46), with the response from Titania, “What, jealous Oberon?” (Shakespeare, 2003, 2.1.47). Both actors were coached by Matua T to recognise that in this first, crucial moment, their dialogue must be spoken with authority, presence and richness, because,

The orator is an esteemed figure in the Māori world. A skilled orator is master of genealogy, ancient chants, local history and proverbs. Not only is he erudite, but a consummate actor as well. His movements are dramatic and timed to give the best possible effect to the statements he is making (Salmond, 1990, p. 147).

To represent a Māori sensibility, the actor must play boldly in the moment, replacing realism with dramatic dynamism, which is how Matua T and I directed the students to communicate their role.

Post-production I sat down with Matua T and asked how he felt *inventing* tikanga for this production, as opposed to drawing an already existing body of cultural action. I had expressed nervousness at the process; however, Matua T assuaged my fears. Essentially, to adapt tikanga “in the guise of creative-aesthetic invention” was acceptable to Matua T. Matua T stated that if he had felt “uncomfortable by something experienced in rehearsal” he would “meditate and reflect, and then change his approach.” However, Matua T “never felt uncomfortable” during the process. Matua T explained any discomfort would have manifested as “spiritual consequences”, if the tikanga had not been respected (Matua T, personal communication, August 16, 2016).

6.6 Learning through and about aesthetics

Unlike Project #1, *The Pohutukawa Tree*, and what was to become Project #3 and the 2018 production *YouthQuake*, in which the aesthetic demands and challenges were, and would be, better understood by me – because of their relationship to my pedagogical-aesthetic knowledge-base – the aesthetic challenges of ...*Dream* would be quite different and uniquely demanding. As a first-generation migrant from overseas, with a still developing knowledge and comprehension of Māoritanga⁸⁴, how could I position myself in such a way to honour te ao Māori, tikanga, and thus reflect a proud and distinct culture appropriately. Surely, to presume that I could currently do so was presumptuous, outwardly arrogant, and troubling to those who looked on from beyond the border of the process which resulted in our ...*Dream*. My colleagues, Matua T and Mary (from our sister school) reminded me that I had taken up a philosophical position as an “allied other” (Kaomea, 2004, p. 32), both in my direction, where I embraced multicultural drama/theatre

⁸⁴ Māori culture; Māori practices and beliefs; Māoriness; the Māori way of life.

practices and output (Bogart, 2000; Schechner 1995) and in my new Dean role. In both roles I recognised that “Critical theory must be localized, grounded in the specific meanings, traditions, customs, and community relations that operate in each indigenous setting” (Denzin, 2006, p. 935-936). Such positioning would not solve the challenges to come, but it would allow me to be open to the possibilities of other voices who could enable the project’s ambition, potentially lessening my errors and mitigating against presumption.

6.6.1 Tensiveness in the aesthetic



Figure 25. Titania’s bower

If I chose an image to show someone that encapsulated the production, it would be the photograph of Bottom, sitting in Titania’s bower: it was a nice image of the tension between the two worlds – te ao Pākehā and te ao Māori. That same tension exists in the photograph of Oberon, as he clicks his fingers to stop Helena in the woodland realm. It perfectly encapsulates his role as Kaitiaki⁸⁵ in this imagined (Māori) realm (Mary, personal communication, August 16, 2016).

What is this guy up to? It’s never gonna work! (Student W, personal communication, August 18, 2016).

In *...Dream*, as outlined earlier, there were three distinct character groupings, who were focused in specific realms, each of which needed a precise aesthetic quality: Titania, Oberon

⁸⁵ Kaitiaki is a “guardian” in te ao Māori.

and the te ao Māori, woodland realm; Theseus, Hippolyta and the court; and the roving mechanicals. The interaction of these three groups is what gives the play its central tension and the dramatic-comedic drive of the play. But how to represent their unique identities aesthetically, authentically and effectively? Within this question was the more troubling issue, of how to represent the te ao Māori realm.

The court of Theseus, into which the audience first enter, is an organised, ordered and precise environment. Its aesthetic is found in the geometric (anti-natural) shapes made by the lighting, and the colour palette, which eschews natural colours in favour of ones that can only come about through manufacturing processes. Alternatively, the Māori realm was one of natural colours and natural shapes to contrast the court aesthetic. There were no hard edges and no processed colours, and the aesthetic favoured colours normally associated with te ao Māori, specifically the green found in greenstone, red, black and off-white. The korowai (or Māori cloak) worn by Titania was made of synthetic (but realistic looking) feathers; this decision was made for environmental reasons, lessening our carbon footprint and modelling an appropriate kaitiakitanga, or sensitivity to the environment. The mechanicals, who were played as a Commedia dell'Arte troupe had an aesthetic that reflected their transitory nature, as they travelled from town to town, looking for audiences. Their costumes were eclectic and purposefully inconsistent, one to the next, and reflected the hand to mouth, improvisatory nature of their existence. Matua T, Mary and I discussed the idea that, although there is a tensiveness between the worlds of the court and the woods, it is the random nature of the mechanicals journey through the woodland realm that unbalances the play in favour of chaos.

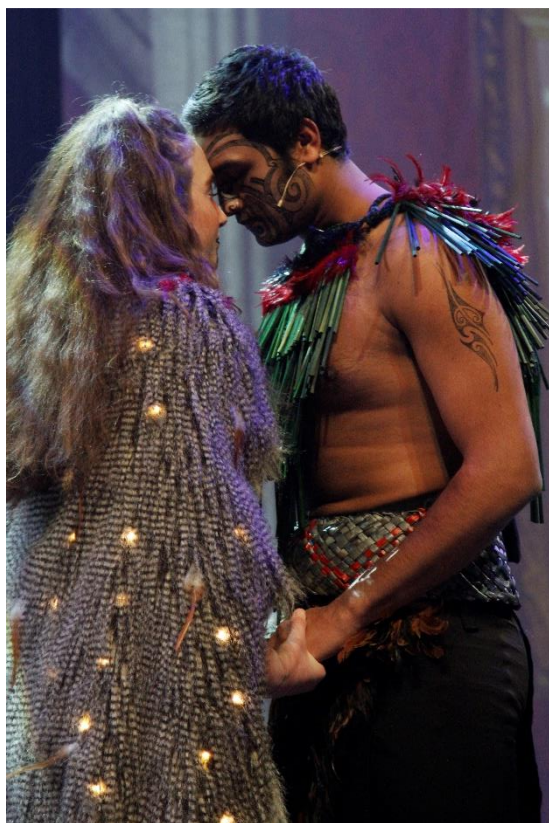


Figure 26. Titania's korowai speckled with lights

The mechanicals are the inadvertent agent of disorder. The mechanicals' role as agents of disorder is suggested textually, through the instruction from Quince (nominally the director of Bottom's troupe of actors) that the actors must meet in the woods to rehearse, in order to avoid prying eyes: "there we will rehearse, for if we meet in the city, we shall be dogged with company, and our devices known" (Shakespeare, 2003, 1.2.39). However, for curriculum and aesthetic reasons, the mechanicals were reimagined as a travelling Commedia dell'Arte troupe of actors, who were constantly in a state of flux, carrying their personal belongings and theatrical props on a large wooden cart, which also served as their rehearsal stage. Such a footprint, travelling through the woodland realm, could not help but to have a deleterious impact on the natural environment.

6.6.2 Learning about, learning through, and aesthetic learning

Some methodologies regard the values and beliefs, practices and customs of communities as 'barriers' to research or as exotic customs with which researchers need to be familiar in order to carry out their work without causing offence. Indigenous methodologies tend to approach cultural protocols, values and behaviours as an integral part of methodology (Smith, 2012, p. 15-16).

When discussing how the aesthetic came to bear during work on ...*Dream* it is important to note the various ways that the aesthetic is approached, methodologically. Smith (2012) firstly argues that a Māori cultural methodology must be one that recognises the existential component at its core. Greenwood (2018) supplements this with three considerations to be made when examining the aesthetic and its relationship to drama knowledge: “learning about the aesthetic”, “learning through aesthetic experience” and “aesthetic learning” (p. 1). In the figure (27) on the following page, I try to outline how these three factors stood alone whilst also enjoying interplay between them as they were applied to ...*Dream*.

During this project specifically, learning *about* the aesthetic allowed the participants to explore, and play with (or in) elements of te ao Māori, for example Tikanga, te reo Māori and Māoritanga, but in the abstract, disconnected from the play. Such work is facilitated by the expert guide (Matua T), the author taking a supporting role. Such learning about the aesthetic was found in the conversations about tikanga and in the warmups, exercises and workshops that Matua T led, developing confidence, facility and skill in the students and staff.

Learning *through* the aesthetic was seen in the relationship and interplay between te ao Māori/Māori performative elements and the play (...*Dream*). The execution of this was achieved by a sharing of duties between Matua T and myself. The work undertaken could have just as easily been a workshop with no discernible product or mandated outcomes, as students and staff learned how a relationship between these two drama cultures might be achieved. It also had the potential to be the most superficial of the three, potentially arbitrary and disconnected, which in turn could have led to a shallow, hollow “end product” theatre that Brook (1968, p. 15) describes, in that the superficial manner which “we loosely call style” matters more than the a foundation or the need to express profound meaning, lacking the “vitality of new invention” (p. 18).

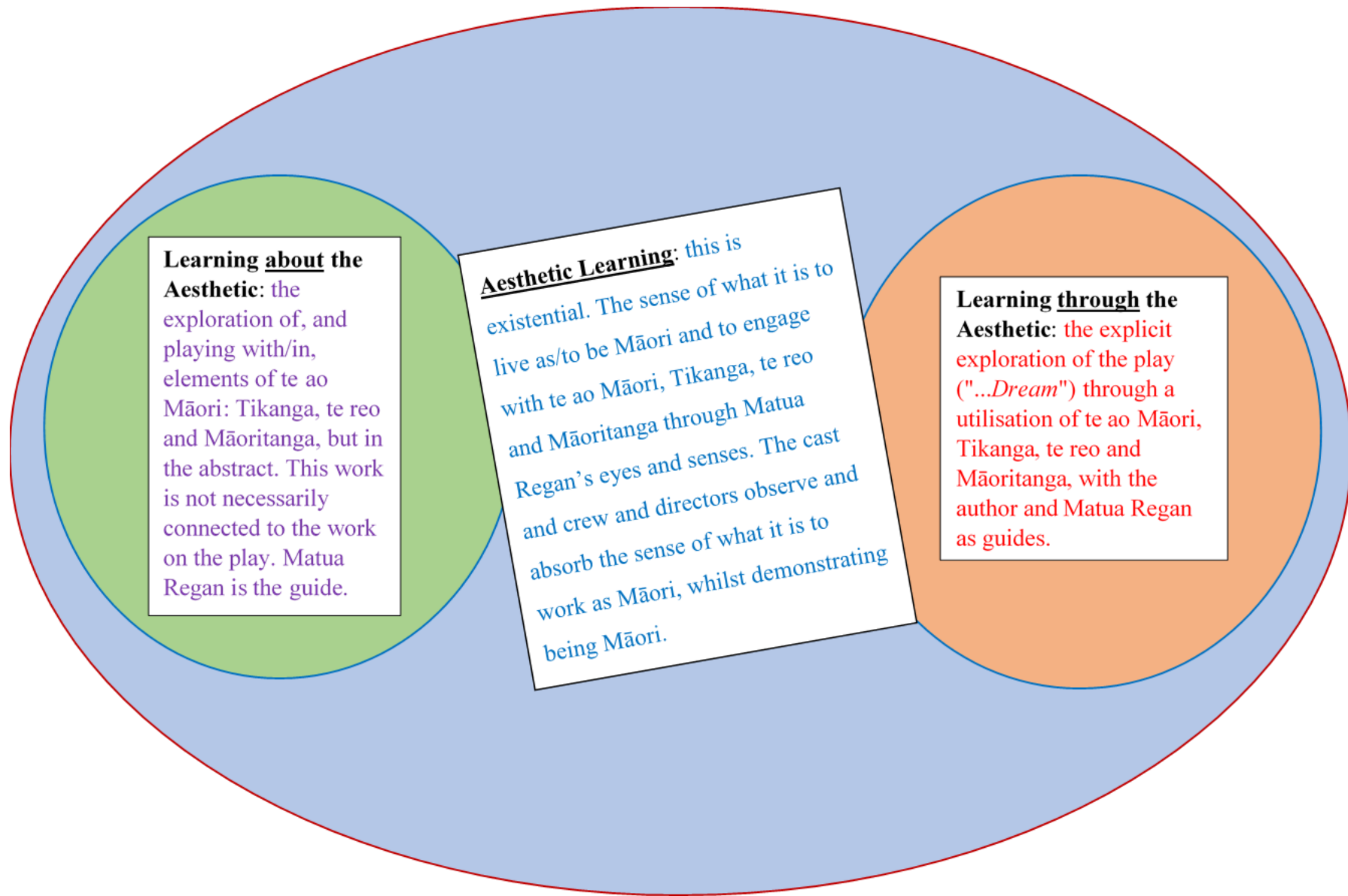


Figure 27. A triptych indicating aesthetic play, exploration, understanding, and aesthetic acquisition during *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Binding learning *about* with learning *through* the aesthetic was Matua T himself, whose presence allowed for *aesthetic learning*. What was clearly manifest in Matua T was a sense of what it is to be Māori, to demonstrate an embodied sense of position and of the true value for the whole self, founded upon a profound engagement in and journey with te ao Māori, Tikanga, te reo and Māoritanga. The cast, crew and directors were privileged to observe and absorb the sense of what it is to work as Māori, whilst watching and working with Matua T as he demonstrated being Māori through his creative work on ...*Dream*, utilising Māori performative arts. As Mary observed, in her post-production interview, Matua T's clear locatedness within te ao Māori "gave permission" for the cast and directors to work in a way that "felt meaningful and rich", leading to a sense of being "more connected" to the world of te ao Māori and to the work. In fact, Mary felt "more emboldened to explore the language" and culture because of the positive influence of the experience of observing and working with Matua T. That exploration was both during production and beyond production in her day-to-day school/teaching work. Mary recounted candidly that she "has a long way to go in regards of learning about, and then demonstrating and embodying, her bicultural identity", but that the production experience had made her more confident and open to addressing this part of her identity (Mary, Personal communication, December 7, 2016).

6.7 Developing self; avoiding tokenism

Observing Matua T embody his sense of self and then expressing this confidently to the students helped in part to mitigate against any sense of tokenism, which had been a concern for all creative participants.

In terms of the New Zealand centric and/or Māori elements of the production, I thought that this was executed seamlessly, and fitted well with the overall narrative of the production. Crucially, at no time, in my opinion, did it feel forced or tokenistic... this allowed the production to remain credible and genuine throughout (Audience member, personal communication, August 8, 2016).

Further post-performance comments from the audience described the utilisation of elements from te ao Māori as being

truly embedded, rather than a token gesture and (that these elements) made a lot of sense (in the context of the interpretation of the play) (Audience member, personal communication, August 8, 2016).

a way of highlighting the sense of spirituality and timelessness of being and connection that is within Māori culture (Audience member, personal communication, August 8, 2016).

Both humbling and encouraging was Matua T's openness that his sense of self (as a Māori male) was still developing, and that he confessed he still had much work to do on himself. While Matua T noticed a "cultural awareness in the students shifting" he also recognised his own journey, learning how to be a better located Māori male, "learning to become more bicultural" as well as learning how to be better located in the multicultural, so that he could "walk in harmony with the other cultures of the world" (Matua T, personal communication, August 16, 2016). What was clear was that learning about and learning through the aesthetic was better enabled due to the presence of Matua T and his visible, personal aesthetic learning, and his invitation to the cast and directors to feel emboldened, to be brave, and join him in aesthetically learning together.

6.7.1 'Go to your bird'

An example from the production processes that reveal the interplay between learning about/through the aesthetic and aesthetic learning was Matua T's work with the fairies who serviced Titania. These young women (and one male) were imagined as something far from the stereotypical winged creatures, coloured white and/or pink that may frequent another production.

One moment that was remarkable was Matua T's and Vera's work with the fairies, around the use of birds to help define the fairies' physicality: this helped underline the heart and the meaning to a character in te ao Māori – it had resonance. Even though it was anti-Western, anti-Stanislavskian and anti-Laban in approach, it was a successful way to understand character. In fact, it was a far more authentic way of finding physical character. It also helped me understand, and have insight into Kapa Haka, and an alternative meaning-making process (Mary, personal communication, August 16, 2016).

As the director, I focused primarily on what Shakespeare's text suggested: the fairies' caring nature and hunter-, forager-gatherer role, and looked for ways to link these to te ao Māori. For example, Cobweb is renowned for staunching nasty cuts – "if I cut my finger, I shall make bold with you" (Shakespeare, 2003, 3.1.100), as well as packaging honey – "bring me the honey" (Shakespeare, 2003, 4.1.9). However, as work was undertaken with the students it was proving very difficult to find the right physicality for the actors playing these roles, or a binding ensemble ethos to tie the individual fairy characters together as a unit.

As a director trained in western forms of performance, my trusted theorists utilised in production would normally be Stanislavski, Brecht, Brook or maybe Artaud. However, during the rehearsal period, it was clear that students were struggling with the characterisation of the fairies: "I am cast in the role of a fairy!? My response was 'meh!'" (Student GA, personal communication, August 16, 2016). This response was not unique, and it was clear that alternative methods of engaging the

imaginations and enthusiasm of the fairies was needed. For myself in the role of director, I initially applied Stanislavskian notions of how to develop and communicate a character, for example the use of objectives, units and actions, an analysis of wants and needs, an application of inner monologue and before time, and the ‘magic if’ (Benedetti, 2000; Magarshack, 1988; Mitter, 1992). Sadly, this yielded poor results. Latterly, I attempted a Brechtian approach, focused on an application of gestus (Willett, 1964), and when that failed, applied Laban Efforts (Newlove & Dalby, 2004). Sadly, none of these approaches resulted in characterisations or a sense of ensemble that was interesting in performance. So, instead, and to help the fairies access their unique character who exist in this Māori realm, Matua T suggested working with them using a specifically Māori performative approach. In short, he trained the actors to embody their fairy character with the primary characteristics of a native bird of Aotearoa: the Tui, Pukeko, Kea, Kiwi, Weka, Takahe, Kakapo, Piwakawaka (Fantail) and the Ruru (Morepork) (Riley, 2005). At first the idea met with resistance; and then Matua T had an epiphany. He became cognisant that most of the fairies were female; what they needed was the right female kaiako (teacher) who could engage and access them in a way that he could not. Enter Vera from stage right.

Vera was Matua T’s good friend and a fellow Māori actor, knowledgeable in Māori performative art forms, and a good teacher. She also approached the task in a Kaupapa Māori way, “that incorporates a model of social change or transformation, privileges Māori knowledge and ways of being” (Smith, 2006, p. 90). A Kaupapa Māori approach is also “collectivistic and is oriented toward benefiting all the research participants and their collectively determined agendas” (Bishop, 2006, p. 114), and “captures a sense of Maori ownership and active control over the future” (Durie, 1995, p. 16).

Being “empathetic and sensitive”⁸⁶, Vera worked with the fairies, breaking down the differing natures of each bird, their primary physical characteristics and how this could be performed. At first, the performances of each bird (by the actor) was seen in microcosm – simple, small, discreet gestures – but with time and confidence the sense of the bird underpinning the character began to be evidenced more strongly and in more dominant ways. By the time the cast were in the theatre preparing for the final performances a strong sense of ensemble and individual fairies was clear and pronounced and was individually and collectively Māori in nature. During the process, there was a realisation that, as a Pākehā director, it was crucial that I be seen by my students engaging Māori expertise. Not to do so would reflect the frustrations of Smith (2000) who noted that

Western researchers and intellectuals can assume to know all that is possible to know of us, on the basis of their brief encounters with some of us. It appals us that the West can

⁸⁶ Student E, personal communication, August 16, 2016.

desire, extract and claim ownership of our ways of knowing, our imagery, the things we create and produce, and then simultaneously reject the people who created and developed those ideas and seek to deny them further opportunities to be creators of their own culture and own nations (p. 1).



Figure 28. The fairies assail Puck, whilst demonstrating their bird characteristics

The use of this Māori performative approach, by Vera and Matua T, became a unique *hack*, a way of the actors entering the role of the fairy quickly and simply. In rehearsals where a tired actor dropped out of their role, Matua T and Mary were often heard calling out “go to your bird”, at which point the actor would reassert the physicality and the specific characteristics of their bird, and then the actor’s fairy quickly followed. It defied the Western-normative approaches I have previously outlined, and created something uniquely satisfying for the actor, and also proving useful as a tool for the director, and adding aesthetic value for an audience:

We thought the bicultural element was blended in seamlessly and added an authentic flavour of our New Zealand heritage to the performance. I admit that I was sceptical that Māori culture could be incorporated into something so very English as Shakespeare, but you pulled it off brilliantly, to the point that if I didn’t know it wasn’t originally written like that, I never would have guessed (Audience member, personal communication, August 8, 2016).

6.8 A Final Blessing; a concluding cross-cultural Māori performative act

During the performances of the production of ...*Dream*, the three realms – te ao Māori, te ao Pākehā and the realm of the mechanicals/Commedia troupe – had overlapped regularly and significantly. The four lovers (Hermia and Lysander; Demetrius and Helena) had found themselves trapped and manipulated by Oberon, the fairies and Puck in the woodland realm; the mechanicals, most notably Bottom, had interacted directly with Titania and her fairies. However, at no point had the power players, the dominant forces of te ao Māori (Oberon and Titania) and their equivalents in te ao Pākehā (Theseus and Hippolyta) interacted in any meaningful way.



Figure 29. Oberon freezes Helena, who has entered his realm: “Fare the well, nymph”

As I have noted, the subtle references in the text to mask use resulted in some changes to the vision I had for the mechanicals. Knowledge of Patupaiarehe and fairies in te ao Māori, allied with my new role as Māori Dean, enabled me to reimagine a Māori way of being that might be seen in the woodland elements of the play, with Matua T’s aesthetic-cultural involvement. As we rehearsed, I now considered another possibility for our shared process and product based around a crucial, ritualistic moment toward the end of the play.

Having directed ...*Dream* before, the lines spoken by Oberon, in blessing the house of Theseus on his and the four lovers' wedding day, had previously eluded me. I had neither found nor executed a satisfactory directorial response to the suggested action described by Oberon: "With this field-dew consecrate" (Shakespeare, 2003, 5.1.375). Oberon's entire speech is an extended meditation on bounty, family, plenty and progeny: "To the best bride-bed will we/Which by us shall blessed be/And the issue there create/Ever shall be fortunate" (Shakespeare, 2003, 5.2.364-367).

I therefore discussed with Matua T the possibility of utilising tikanga to assert and reflect the reconciliation between the two worlds, te ao Māori and te ao Pākehā. The construction of the invented tikanga could not allow for primacy of either group: all must be resolved; the worlds must be in harmony by the end of the ritual. Theseus's lines "The iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve./Lovers to bed; 'tis almost fairy time." (Shakespeare, 2003, 5.1.343-345) were framed as the start point for the reconciliation ritual between the two worlds. As Theseus declared these lines of dialogue, a waiata was heard from the wings, the on-stage lighting changed to a moodier, dimmer state and the woodland realm (the fairies, Puck, Oberon and Titania) entered, quietly singing, their presence loudly clashing with the euro-centric realm they now inhabited. The assembled party guests then took on a relaxed, trance-like state as they were gently, kindly manipulated into a large ring (by the fairies) that encircled the playing space, and then invited to kneel; the principal characters remained standing. As the cast kneeled, Oberon and Titania remained standing, and from a wooden bowl – Rimu, a native wood to Aotearoa and which was filled with blessed water – cleansed and purified the assembled, by sprinkling water upon them. This removed the stain of the previous hostility held between the two factions, te ao Māori and te ao Pākehā. In order to be able to sprinkle the water, Oberon and Titania dipped a small, leafed Pohutukawa twig into the bowl (as seen in Figure 30), and as each sprinkled, they threw their hands high, in order that their sprinkles reached the audience as well. By doing this, the actors were recognising the opening moments of the play, in which the audience had been endowed as guests at the engagement party of Theseus and Hippolyta, thus drawing the threads of the start and end together. The three pairs of newly-weds – Theseus and Hippolyta; Lysander and Hermia; Demetrius and Helena – were then blessed by Oberon and Titania as plates of sweetbread were offered. The newly-weds duly fed their new spouse kindly, trance-like, ritualistically, much as a sacrament might be offered and consumed to show devotion. Then the lovers exited, leaving Oberon and Titania on stage standing alone. Titania and Oberon then shared the speaking of Oberon's final speech of blessing: "Now, until the break of day,/Through this house each fairy stray" (Shakespeare, 2003, 5.1.361-362). but concluded it with their own blessing. The Indian Boy –

whose presence in Titania's life Oberon resented, and who had unwittingly provoked their initial tension – now took up the Rimu bowl (Figure 30) and using the Pohutukawa twig, sprinkled both Titania and Oberon as they ended with a hongi, watched by the assembled. Through this act, the two worlds were gifted harmony.



Figure 30. Oberon and Titania are blessed by the Indian Boy, Titania's ward

6.9 Exploring/implementing curriculum

After the success of my first production at Westlake, *Assassins*, I approached the senior leadership team (SLT) with a proposal. This was to allow all students involved in any future production, whether a curriculum drama student or not, to receive the relevant credits (found in the drama curriculum) which were able to be achieved through a rehearsal process. Through production processes many students have experienced a similar, if not augmented, experience of drama class work, during which a course of study would likely lead to the achievement of NCEA credits. Many of our non-drama students in production were keen to earn these credits; after all, they had put in the work, why not receive the reward. A good example of an easily achievable standard by many students involved in a production is AS1.6, AS2.6 or AS3.6, which requires the student to “Perform an acting role”⁸⁷, which is a large part of the focus of a school production.

Sadly, SLT did not agree, fearing an increase in workload for teaching staff, and so the proposal was rejected. As I planned for future productions, I considered how could I holistically and

⁸⁷ Level 2, AS2.6 requires a “substantial acting role”, and Level 3, AS3.6 a “substantial acting role in a significant production”.

strategically plan to include our curriculum – New Zealand Curriculum (NZC), Arts Curriculum, school curricula – in the production, its processes and product?

6.9.1 *The New Zealand Curriculum in ...Dream*

From the schematic, Figure 31, the three areas that I was most interested in including in *...Dream* were the Values, Key Competencies and Principles of the NZC. Starting with the last, the Principles section clearly states that students must gain an appreciation for the “bicultural foundations of Aotearoa New Zealand” and that students must “acquire knowledge of te reo Māori me ōna tikanga” (NZC, 2007, p. 9) and an appreciation for our founding document, Te Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty of Waitangi). Further to this, the Principles expect that the NZC, and work generated through its implementation, must reflect “New Zealand’s cultural diversity”, as well as valuing “the histories and traditions of its peoples” (NZC, 2007, p. 9). The final element relevant from the Principles section is the notion of “Community Engagement”, in which students are enabled to connect school to “their wider lives” and allows for support from “their families, whānau and communities” (NZC, 2007, p. 9). An appreciation of these facets led to the imagining of *...Dream* as a bicultural production as well as the involvement of Matua T.



Figure 31. *The New Zealand Curriculum*, 2007 (MoE)

From the Values section, the elements I was interested in exploring were “innovation, inquiry and curiosity”, as these sit at the heart of a productive workshop and rehearsal process, “community and participation”, due to the nature of the work being shared publicly, as an expression of the school’s identity and culture, and “ecological sustainability” (NZC, 2007, p. 10). Ecological sustainability links well to the value or precept in te ao Māori of kaitiakitanga, or guardianship of our shared environment, which became a feature of the production, and is discussed elsewhere in the chapter.

The Key Competencies are (coincidentally) the core business of drama and theatre teaching and learning, but three were discussed and acted upon in the particular: “using language, symbols, and texts”, “relating to others” and “participating and contributing” (NZC, 2007, p. 12-13). The language and symbols were those we discovered and acted upon, both from Shakespeare’s world and in his text and those that Matua T brought to workshop and rehearsal and were an expression of te ao Māori and Māoritanga. Our work on relating to others was both in the general conduct of the

cast, crew and staff towards one another and also in the students' "ability to listen actively, recognise different points of view, negotiate, and share ideas" (NZC, 2007, p. 12). This was important for students to understand and execute, as our multicultural cast was being introduced to many new and confronting ideas that if they did not engage in with an open mind and heart would have led to potential failure, impacting their learning. Participating and contributing in the NZC is focused around "communities" who share a "common interest or culture" (NZC, 2007, p. 13). "Students who participate and contribute in communities have a sense of belonging and the confidence to participate within new contexts" (NZC, 2007, p. 13).

In the day-to-day running of a school, the Values, Key Competencies and Principles, experienced by a student, are not necessarily directly assessed, through use of an Achievement Standard for example, but these facets may be embedded in the curriculum of a specific subject. In our school culture, some curriculum areas report on the acquisition of Key Competencies specifically, as students experience these in the subtle fabric of a unit of work or course. In ...*Dream* the Values, Key Competencies and Principles were ways we scaffolded approaches to workshop, rehearsal and new ways of viewing the world through performance (and review) that allowed for acquisition of these crucial real-world, life skills.

Further to this inclusion of the 'front end' of the NZC, and although not directly assessed, the use of (and attention drawn to) one specific drama curriculum course taught at the school was an idea that I decided upon, ahead of the production. I decided to do so for two reasons: I wanted to remind and refresh the roles of the mechanicals in ...*Dream*, from Athenian artisans to something approaching a professional touring theatre company. This in turn would allow the troupe to perform a more dynamic, dramatic and polished rendition of Pyramus and Thisbe in the penultimate scene of ...*Dream*. Secondly, there is a suggestion in the ...*Dream* play script of the use of masks, which in the NCEA drama curriculum is both a stage technology and a convention: "*Flute*: Nay, faith, let me not play a woman: I have a beard coming. *Quince*: That's all one: you shall play it in a mask; and you may speak as small as you will" (Shakespeare, 2003, 1.2.19-20). In 2015 for *Assassins*, I had created an Education Pack for Stephen Sondheim's musical, which had been gifted to all teaching staff. Within it were facts about the musical, its social relevance, facts around gun deaths and gun violence and cross-curricular questions and advanced study pathways. However, I had placed nothing within the stage production of *Assassins* that was curriculum related; this was something I considered valuable in 2016 for ...*Dream*. For ...*Dream*, not only did I apply facets of the NZC throughout the process, I also planned to include strategic ideas in the product.

In Year 11 at (Level 1), a drama student's first course of work is around Commedia dell 'Arte. For this course, I assess the work both formatively and summatively using AS1.4 Use features of a

drama/theatre form in a performance⁸⁸. Commedia is a form that can be found in the proto renaissance, dating from the 13th Century, in which “actors took pre-existing folk forms, improvised masking, music and dance and developed them into a theatrical medium” (Rudlin, 1997, p. 2). However, the impact of Commedia can still be seen today, in cartoons such as *The Simpsons* and *Family Guy*, and most notably in *Fawlty Towers*. It is an important theatre form to explore for numerous reasons, but two I will specifically unpack here.

Firstly, its performance style requirements include a heightened, exaggerated or hyper-physical and hyper-vocal quality, founded upon archetypal characters: Il Capitano – the braggart warrior; Pantalone – the depraved, avaricious old man; Isabella – the winsome, romantic girl; Arlecchino (Harlequin) – the foolish servant, to name but four in this theatrical universe. Notably, most of the characters are masked, and these masks reflect their essential nature or character. Furthermore, this course is the very first course in Year 11 for all our drama students, and its function is to create a foundation of expected class and rehearsal norms, which will underpin the students’ future work, including to encourage bold choices and courageous decision making, and to lay a groundwork of a common drama/theatre vernacular that will be found in much of the drama and theatre work that follows at Levels 1, 2 and 3.

Secondly, in 2016, my tenure at the school was only a little over a year old, and I wanted to make a clear link between the activity *publicly* seen on stage during a school production, with the *private* world of the little-seen curriculum drama work, which occurs in class. In short, I was trying to use the production as a promotional tool for curriculum drama and its benefits, and by placing a curriculum course so explicitly at the heart of the production and performance I was drawing a clear line between the two worlds.

Figure 32 draws all these disparate discussion threads together in a graphic manner that is quick and tangible. The upper arc details how the NZC (2007) was consciously mined, in order to utilise the most appropriate factors for process and production – Values, Key Competencies and Principles, and how these led to the consideration of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, Community and Culture, which in turn could be found in the final performances of ...*Dream*. The lower arc considers assessment and curriculum concerns, focusing on how Assessment Specifications, year levels and theatre forms (Commedia dell ‘Arte) might be applied. By foregrounding Commedia dell ‘Arte, due to the suggestion of mask work in the script, links between the private and public realms of drama are enabled to be seen, in the final performances of ...*Dream*.

⁸⁸ <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/nqfdocs/ncea-resource/achievements/2017/as90999.pdf>

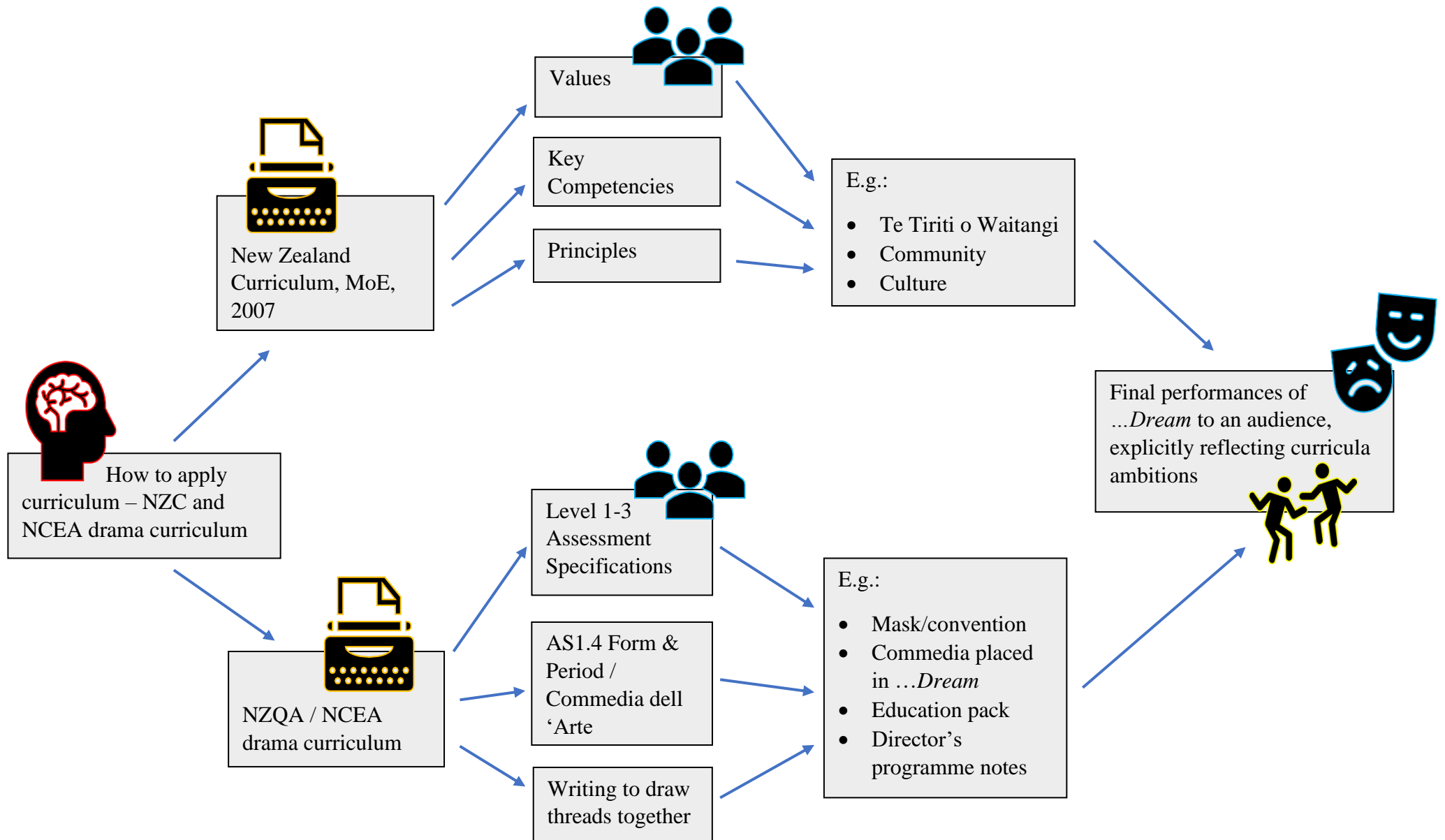


Figure 32. A model demonstrating how curricula were applied to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Finally, since 2016, I have made the strategic decision to regularly and consistently situate aspects of curriculum drama and theatre into the school production, which specifically reflect the Level 1, 2 and 3 NCEA examination Assessment Specifications for that year. Each year level has slightly different Assessment Specifications, reflecting each curriculum level, and these specifications detail the broad outline of what will probably be the focus of the end-of-year External Examinations. With the examinations in mind, and recognising that all drama students must attend live theatre during the calendar year preceding the examinations, the NCEA drama students were invited to attend a free open dress rehearsal/preview of the school production (in this instance, ...*Dream*), ahead of the final performances. At this open dress rehearsal/preview the drama students saw aspects⁸⁹ of drama and theatre that are referenced in the NCEA Assessment Specifications. Furthermore, the drama staff have been briefed on what aspects were included in the production, and the students received both a pre-viewing briefing on what to look out for (and their relevance to the examinations) as well as a post-viewing discussion and deconstruction of the production and performance. To further help the drama students, as well as enlighten the paying audience, programme notes were (and continue to be) written, to highlight further where drama aspects, inspired by the Assessment Specifications, can be found in the production and performance.

Each year level has the option of two external drama examinations: AS1.3 and AS1.7 at Level 1; AS2.3 and AS2.7 at Level 2; and AS3.3 and AS3.7 at Level 3. The AS1.3/2.3/3.3 examinations focuses on theatre form and period, with differentiated variance between Levels 1, 2 and 3, and the AS1.7/2.7/3.7 examinations focuses on the watching and deconstruction of live theatre, with equivalent differentiation.

6.10 ‘Dad, if we help Mr. Brown clear up the petals⁹⁰, can we come to the show tomorrow?’⁹¹: percipients’ reactions to the production

The response of one audience member, as found in the title to this section of the chapter, is notable, as in unpacking it we are allowed a glimpse into an audience experience which is otherwise unknowable. Unknowable, initially, because my position as the aesthete and educator with a stated pedagogical-creative ambition is entirely subjective; the audiences’ responses objective. Compounding this is my inability to relax, to allow the production to

⁸⁹ According to NZQA, “aspects” include drama techniques, drama elements, drama technologies and drama conventions.

⁹⁰ The petals in question, were small squares of coloured paper, dropped for magical effect when Oberon placed the potion on Lysander and Demetrius.

⁹¹ This was the response of a teaching colleague’s son, who was six at the time he attended the production of ...*Dream*.

wash over me as it might have done audiences, as I am too invested in how the production, in all its complexities, plays out during any given performance.

6.10.1 Audience feedback/response/critique

Not every response, nor all feedback, to ...*Dream* was positive; some was negative, and it would be good at this point to examine and unpack four of these responses, two students, one teacher and the cast.

In the final week of Term 2, prior to the final performances of ...*Dream* in Term 3, the cast and technical crew had the opportunity to give a performance during a school assembly. This is something that the drama department has done during my tenure, in order to promote the current production and give the students a chance to test themselves in front of a live audience. On this occasion, the brief six-minute excerpt went well, with actors and technical team executing the scene of initial confrontation between Oberon and Puck, with Titania and her fairies. However, some students in the assembly audience reacted inappropriately to what they saw on stage, especially towards the young female actors, about whom they became a little agitated, which in turn became vocal. Sadly, some of the Māori students, who were sitting together in the student body, took umbrage at what they interpreted as some of their peers mocking their culture. This led to agitation amongst the Māori students, which in turn led to two students walking out of the assembly. Of the two students, one had taken offence at the representation of his Māori culture by non-Māori students: specifically, the performing of haka, the wearing of piupiu, and the use of the keening cry of the Karanga. In contrast, the second student was offended by what he had perceived as the disrespectful student response to te ao Māori being shown onstage. I observed both young men leave the assembly, and it latterly became a topic of conversation in my Year 13 class. Subsequently, I sought out both men in order to speak directly with them, to better understand their concerns.

6.10.2 Student one

Student one had taken great offence at the representation of his Māori culture by non-Māori students. He considered it “inappropriate” bordering on “racist” and being school sanctioned showed how the school was getting it wrong on bicultural issues. When I pointed out that some of the students in the scene shown at assembly were Māori, he was shocked and a little embarrassed. However, this did not change his opinion of the “wrongheadedness” of the decision to perform the scene (personal communication, July, 2016). Troubled by this student’s words I humbly asked my two kaumatua for their perspective. In speaking with

Matua JW, our new head of the Māori department, I learned two things: 1. the assembly performance had gone down well with most of the students studying te reo, and it had been a welcome conversation starter, and 2. the specific student in question was still developing a language and cultural framework, and for Matua JW what was clear was that this student's knowledge of Tikanga, te ao Māori and Māoritanga was so modest that it rather invalidated his criticism. As his teacher of Māori Matua JW explained that this student's knowledge was so basic that he could not position himself as an arbiter of what is appropriate to be shown of the Māori culture in such an assembly sharing (Matua JW, personal communication, July 24, 2016). For my second kaumatua, Matua T (the production's Māori Cultural Advisor) his response was quite plain: "more education was needed". Education for those students responding inappropriately to what they saw on stage at assembly, who needed more engagement, not less, with Māori cultural practices. The more they saw, the more that the experience became "normal", and the greater the likelihood of "cultural understanding". Furthermore, teachers, who would also be present at such events, would become comfortable with both the experience and the ability to unpack it with students in class and in conversation, creating a normative response to Māori cultural events such as ours (Matua T, personal communication, July 26, 2016). There was also a need for "more education" for the individual I spoke with, who had been critical of what he had seen. His response, though valid, was formed in a very limited manner, founded upon a modest knowledge of te ao Māori and tikanga, and crucially the developing politics of what was appropriate to share in a post-colonial context.

6.10.3 Student two

Student two, was interesting for different reasons, as he had taken offence by how the general student body (in the assembly) had reacted to te ao Māori being shown onstage. This student perceived that non-Māori students had mocked and ridiculed the elements of te ao Māori that they had seen presented onstage. His perception was that the students present had, through their mocking of what they saw, reflected other responses to Māori issues at large in society; it was no coincidence that in the weeks prior to the assembly performance, Dr Don Brash – politician and former National party leader – had been making negative, controversial comments about bicultural relations in the press. In response to this commentary, other observers had written concurring and dissenting opinions, making the political climate rather testy. It was in this climate that the student responded in the way that he did; again, although valid, this response was bound by time and context.

6.10.4 A teacher responds

One teacher (HN) gave a response that reflected a tension in the school's Strategic Plan #2; that is between multiculturalism and biculturalism. The teacher in question attended a full performance in the production week, as opposed to the assembly sharing. Subsequently, the teacher also attended the repeat presentation of my PhD colloquium examination. During questions and answers at the end of the colloquium, the teacher initially praised the Māori-centric nature of the work, in which the production "thoughtfully joined together an original story and a woodland realm full of Māori culture". However, the teacher also revealed that they "had some concerns of how Māori culture was foregrounded, and Asian culture was under-represented, and can be viewed as an inferior culture, compared to (the dominant) European culture in the show" (HN, personal communication, August 19, 2016). The same teacher followed up by asking: "Nick, although I recognise the quality of the work and how it speaks to and for tangata whenua and biculturalism, where – may I ask – is the voice of Asian New Zealand?" (HN, personal communication, August 19, 2016). The teacher in question was a teacher of languages, specifically Japanese and Chinese. Although this opinion was a valid response, I initially dismissed the teacher's feedback, affronted that the nobility of the production's ambition had been misconstrued. I even said at the colloquium that although I had sympathy for the teacher's position, a dramatic work that foregrounded Asian culture(s) was a task for another director, not for me at this time. I had responded in this way because I was too sensitive, too wedded to the success of the process and product, my positioning too subjective. However, I did note the critique in my journal, and in the days that followed I started to hear this teacher's words repeated in my head and started to gain some objectivity and realised that their commentary did not deny the success of the show, and – more importantly – a further, robust conversation, might lead to something fruitful. And so, a few days later I sat down with the same teacher (HN) and discussed their concerns more deeply, and how drama could be an active participant in an agenda that the languages department was keen to pursue. This conversation led to Project #3, and *YouthQuake*.

6.10.5 A cast responds

In the post-production interviews, I undertook with the students involved in ...*Dream*, there were many positives to discuss: the "quality of whakawhanaungatanga" amongst the cast and crew; the sense of "becoming closer to a Māori world view"; Māori students in the production becoming "more connected" with their culture; the positive experience of working

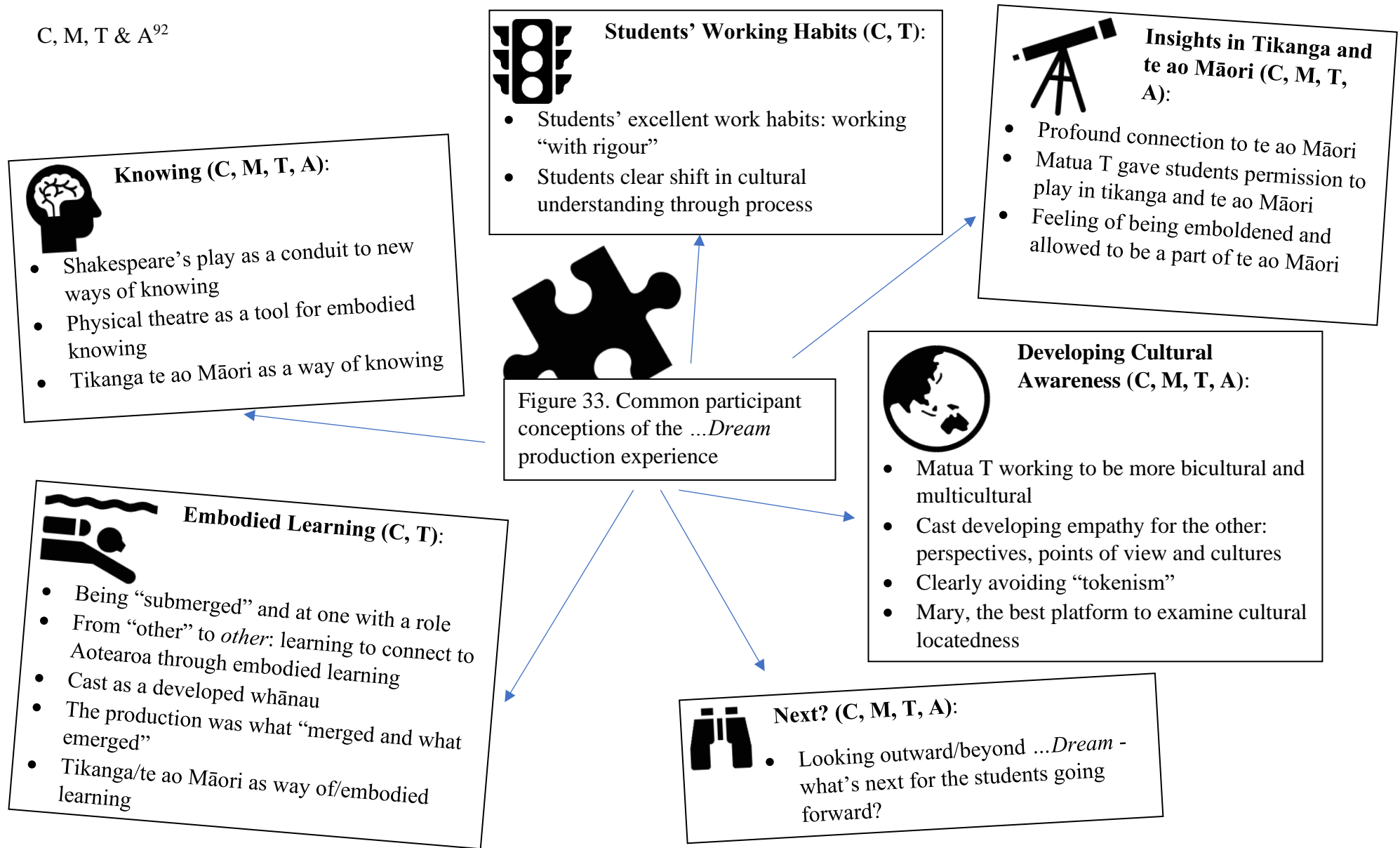
with Matua T and the “Māori boost” that he provided (personal communication, October 26, 2016). Permeating every conversation was an impression that all students shared, which was that the process and final product were both “a great way into a subject that was little understood” by the cast, and by society. Furthermore, for the students to learn in an embodied manner, to be given credit, respect and a responsibility to physically execute the cultural ideas at the heart of the play was profoundly empowering.

To better understand the data generated by this process of interviewing the cast, as well as my collaborators and my own reflections, all responses were turned into a graphic form to better comprehend the meaning(s) and implications for future action (Figure 33). As I collated the data, I recognised that there were six themes that the students spoke to, and so I shaped the diagram accordingly (Figure 33):

- Knowing
- Student’s working habits
- Insights in tikanga and te ao Māori
- Developing cultural awareness
- Embodied learning
- Next?

I overlapped these students’ responses with those of Matua T and Mary, my collaborators, as well as my own reflections as director of the project. It was apparent from the data that both the students and director/collaborators connected most profoundly around Knowing (ways of knowing and embodied knowing), Insights in Tikanga and te ao Māori (connection and experience of), and Developing Cultural Awareness (the bicultural and multicultural; empathy for one another, and locatedness). What was most apparent though from the data analysis was that all participants, especially the students, wanted to know what happens Next? Now that the processes had ended, and the production was over: “what’s next?” This was the unexpected yet valid response from the cast and collaborators: all the work on ...*Dream* had enriched and empowered us, but what do we do now? Where can we students go, in regards of performance, to further the production’s ideas and our new-found confidence in our growing empathy, understanding and knowledge of tikanga and te ao Māori? What are the next steps, the next performances, the next workshops or the next engagement with te ao Māori that will satiate this new-found hunger? To these questions, I am embarrassed to say, I had no worthy response. As the curtain came down on the

production, and amidst a clamour of overwhelming positive responses, I too had to ask myself the same question, “what’s next?”



⁹² C (cast), M (Mary), T (Matua T), A (author) experienced this facet of the rehearsal processes and production.

6.11 Epilogue

A Midsummer Night's Dream had nominally been a success, and according to the feedback it received the process and product had satisfied the community it served (Kershaw, 1992).

However, the strongly asserted critique by my teaching colleague – over how Asian culture was under-represented in the production – grew ever larger in my imagination. Initially, I dismissed the observation, as I felt that it undermined my endeavour and my research; but as time went on, I came to substitute my subjective response with an objective pressure. I began to recognise that there was a tension between my Research-based self and my Situationally-created self (Raphael, 2003), and that this tension needed examining, for the good of my students, my research and my creative work. The research-based self is

a fledgling researcher, a drama educator and lecturer, a person with a purpose and a goal to contribute something new and of value through research and to make a difference for the participants involved, a person who holds certain educational philosophies and beliefs (Raphael, 2003, as cited in O'Toole, 2006, p. 34).

Which stands in contrast to our

Situationally-created selves: a teacher of [her theatre group – the research participants], a student researcher and learner, a director, a facilitator, a co-creator, a role model, a critic, mentor and friend, an audience, an advocate (Raphael, 2003, as cited in O'Toole, 2006, p. 34).

...*Dream* had been a success for me in my role as research-based self, but I recognised that my “educational philosophies and beliefs” had demonstrated bias, had been predetermined at the outset, and were not as open to student- and colleague-critique as I had hoped. I began to recognise that I possessed a “blind spot”, and that it was preventing me from imagining a “curricular change to make learning more inclusive and democratic” (Taylor & Manning, 2010, p. 1). If I had been fully, truly open-minded, open-hearted and open to inclusivity, then maybe I would have truly heard and more quickly acted upon the critique my colleague had made at my repeated Colloquium, but much earlier and by someone else. I recognised that I needed to get closer to something approaching a situationally-created self, and become that “role model, a critic... an audience, an advocate” (Raphael, 2003, as cited in O'Toole, 2006, p. 34). By aligning myself with my students and colleagues in the role of facilitator, co-creator and advocate maybe I could make myself more open to the questions raised by other members of our multicultural school community, and reflect their needs, ambition and voice.

Initially, I could not conceive of a suitable dramatic-aesthetic-educational response to my objective realisation to my colleague's critique. However, I knew that the response must be embodied by students as ...*Dream* had been, as a "collaborative and contextualized use of bodies in specific local spaces can help students and teachers to connect viscerally to the issues" (Harman and French, 2004, p. 107). As Boal (1979) had suggested, an efficacious way of working dramatically was to encourage actors "to use their bodies rather than language to portray and communicate realities." There were possibilities, suggestions for a process in anticipation of such a production, for example, Boal's "Image Theatre begins with the collective arrangement of bodies in several poses in order to denote a certain prevailing reality." By doing so, Boal saw the actors "making thought visible" (p. 137). As I researched the work of other practitioners, with a recognition of a growing personal crisis, and an eye to what might inspire my next dramatic work, I recognised the value in Reinelt's (1998) assertion not to fear such a crisis, as "A crisis is a turning point, when conflict must be dealt with even if we cannot resolve it. It is a tension that opens up a space of indeterminacy, threatens to destabilize social structures, and enables a creative uncertainty" (p. 284). The notion of "indeterminacy" and "creative uncertainty" did not scare me but rather excited me, creating a space for creative-aesthetic-educational departures and imagined possibilities for new work. In the writing of Holman Jones (2005) I found an ally and an advocate for what might come next in my work with students, as she compressed various researchers' ideas around dramatic change-making:

I want to challenge you to do the following:

- *Stage impossible encounters.* Create texts that stage what Cohen-Cruz (2001) termed "impossible encounters" in the "capacity to bring people in contact with ideas, situations or others that appear to be totally different" (p. 105).
- ...Strive to make work that "might act as a doorway, an instrument of encounter, a place of public and private negotiations" (Salverson, 2001, p. 125).
- *Create disturbances.* Value texts that "mean to provoke, to raise questions, [and] to implicate" authors and audiences, texts that create disturbances (Hughes & Román, 1998, p. 9)" (Holman Jones, 2005, p. 773).

The notions of the “impossible encounters”, the “place of public and private negotiations”, and a dramatic work that “create disturbances” all seemed eminently tangible and performative (Holman Jones, 2005, p. 773). I recognised that if I was to investigate the possibilities inherent in the critique from my colleague (around the inclusion of Asian-New Zealand voice in dramatic production) I would need to thoroughly, appropriately and authentically engage the key voices from this community. However, with so few Asian-New Zealanders in the Westlake drama community, I would need to show these students (and beyond) how a dramatic-theatrical production could be a relevant form of self-representation and expression. For this community I wondered how performance could act as “an attempt to present the similarity between the fictional world and the real world to the students, and perhaps also to understand better the complexities in students’ attitudes” (Schonmann, 1996, p. 75-76). To potentially work in a multicultural frame, whilst recognising the strong interplay between cultures – an intercultural encounter – would mean that I would need to recognise in myself, my community, my society and crucially my school, what van den Berg (1996) describes as the “structures of dominance and subordination” that exist:

The cultural order involves both difference and discrimination. Consequently, teaching theatre within a multicultural setting is far from non-committal and points of view are always involved. My point of view is predicated on a cultural formulation where different voices are entertained without being deafened by the Western one (p. 224-225).

I recognised that any new, dramatic work that was created must “establish a process in which the boundaries are exceeded and the experience of difference itself is produced” (van den Berg, 1996, p. 225). Yet still, as I read, researched and ruminated I had no idea what this next step, my next dramatic-aesthetic-educational work, at my school would be. As I re-read my research question I considered: ‘how will I engage the community, in all its rich diversity?’; ‘what process(es) and product(s) would be an appropriate dramatic response to this provocation?’; ‘who will mediate an appropriate aesthetic response for such a multicultural event and product?’; ‘what parts of the various curricula could be/should be be utilised?’ No answer came; however, a vague image started to form, another “formless hunch” (Brook, 1988, p. 3) but in visual form. A line of students, all from different cultural backgrounds, standing united, confident, connected, with arms outstretched inviting the audience in. If only I could discern it more fully.

Chapter 7: The Traverse and the Dialogic

I turned to the Showdown Awards⁹³ website expectantly. Our production had been a good one, we had felt, and our audience and senior leadership concurred; but would we receive nominations that the students could be proud of, that would reflect all that hard work?

“What does it say?” my colleague asked.

“Hang on,” I replied, “the page is still loading; curse our internet,” I joked.

A few seconds passed and then the list of nominations made themselves known. As they appeared, my colleague appeared on my shoulder and we read the list together.

“Yes! A nomination for Best Cast,” declared my excited friend.

“And Best Actor in a Lead Role,” I followed with.

“And look – nominations for the technical awards too,” came a reply.

We continued to read and count our nominations and those of our competitor schools. As we did this, I also found myself undertaking an accidental analysis of the musicals and plays performed by schools in that calendar year. Curious, I thought, as I noted the typicality and predictability of the work being produced in that year. The pressures for schools to champion ‘culture’, the nature of the competition, and the budget of some of the larger schools, had led to a somewhat normative list. For every musical listed, such as Beauty and the Beast, there was a predictable play twin such as The Crucible; for every Oliver! there was a The Winter’s Tale. As I collated a list my opinion and disappointment started to build, and then a comment from Ross Gumbly came to mind⁹⁴: “Why do we so often default to these American or English drama stories, as great as they are, when we have so many stories of our own to tell?”

“How true,” I found myself saying out loud.

“Pardon?” came a reply.

“Err, sorry,” I replied, embarrassed. “Thinking out loud,” I declared, by way of justification for my misplaced words.

⁹³ <http://showdown.org.nz/>

⁹⁴ Ross Gumbly is the Artistic Director of The Court Theatre in Christchurch, and this comment was made during an improvisation workshop with The Court Jesters, of whom he was a founding member.

As we returned to scouring the pages on the internet, Ross Gumbly's words burrowed into my imagination, and a Peter Brook-like "formless hunch" (Brook, 1988, p. 3) began to coalesce cloud-like in my imagination. Quietly, and to myself, I asked: "Why aren't we telling more of our own stories?"

7.1 Lights down; reverent audience hush. Actor minds switched on; excited anticipation.

7.30pm. The audience have taken their seats; taken time to recognise each other across the traverse. They are old and young; regular theatre goers and not; Pākehā, Māori, Asian-New Zealanders, and European-New Zealanders; intrigued by what they have heard, or not.

Images play on the giant ship's sail-like projection screens. The lighting is low but evident, and playful – gobos tease the stage floor in complex patterns. An actor in white appears at the far end of the playing space, eager to catch the eye of the assembled. As she does so the word 'YouthQuake' appears on the ship's sails, above the audience's head, and just as the tension rises before she speaks, the word vibrates excitedly and explodes into tiny fragments.

“Comfort,” the actor calls out, and as she does so new projections and actors appear: behind the actor on the onstage screen we read a slowly marching definition of the word comfort, as a few, then a number, then an army of actors appear. They are younger and older, they are male and female, and they fill the entirety of the performance space, between the traverse.



Figure 34. *YouthQuake*, 2018: an example of physical theatre, used at the play's start

In tableaux, they all gather in small sub-groups of a little over ten students, in six well-spaced positions in the space. Each sub-group has a mirror held by one of their number. And then, the actor who we first met a few moments before, smiling and encouraging, starts to speak,

and as she does, she moves, in a straight line between the traverse towards the entrance to the auditorium and the mezzanine level above:

“Comfort” – to relieve from pain or distress; to soothe, cheer, console; to support or encourage; something that gives ease, consolation, enjoyment; freedom from annoyance; quiet enjoyment; a degree of luxury... “Comfort.” A dictionary definition is, however, a pale comparison to that which we seek, truly strive for, pursue (Brown & Milburn, 2018, p. 1).

As the speaking actor passes each sub-group, one member of that group is lifted high, utilising physical theatre techniques, and they then receive the mirror, bouncing light initially from the first group to the next until it reaches the last group on the speaking actor’s final line of dialogue, “pursue”. In this moment the light that has been shared between sub-groups, in an act of performative communion, is finally directed to the mezzanine level, where we find revealed two actors standing, waiting for the second scene to begin. The actors below gather, looking upwards in a huddled mass of excitement and hope, at the words to come.



Figure 35. *YouthQuake*, 2018: actors wait to begin scene 2 on the mezzanine level

7.2 Antecedents: ‘Nick, where’s the voice of Asian New Zealand?’

The 2016 school production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* had been a great success, in terms of the critical reception, the stimulating conversations that were happening amongst students and staff, and in regards of positively positioning tangata whenua, Maoritanga, tikanga Māori, and conversations about biculturalism. It also reflected, at least in terms of drama and theatre, a positive response to the then School Strategic Plan and article #2: ‘To promote biculturalism in a multicultural context.’ The production was also discussed and recognised by the school community as a “Communal” success (Neelands, 1996, p. 29):

Communal	Theatre as an act of community in which we actively participate in the making of communal representations; theatre as the social and aesthetic expression of a community's hopes, fears and dreams.
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However, two conversations were noteworthy, and were a subtle critique of the prevailing response to the work and the mood in both schools.

Firstly, was a widely held response from student participants in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; in essence, 'what happens next?' The students recognised the aesthetic power of the production, in creating a voice and space for tangata whenua; but what would happen to these voices now the production was over? Furthermore, the student participants had greatly enjoyed the collaborative nature of the aesthetic exploration of the play, through workshops exploring physical theatre and Māori tikanga (with the author and Matua T) and in a rehearsal where hierarchy was mediated by shared leadership, and where agency and student voice were embraced and engaged with. To these questions and ambitions, I had no formulated response, no next step, no guarantee that any of these successful modes of working would be replicated in future productions.

At the same time as this post-production debrief with students, I undertook my colloquium exam for my PhD. The exam having gone well I decided to repeat the process but this time with school staff keen to learn about how *A Midsummer Night's Dream (...Dream)* had been approached, through workshop, rehearsal and in production. During this session, one of the language faculty teachers (HN) praised the production, but then posited the following: "Nick, although I recognise the quality of the work and how it speaks to and for tangata whenua and biculturalism, where – may I ask – is the voice of Asian New Zealand?" (HN, personal communication, August 19, 2016).



Figure 36. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act II/Scene ii: "Sing me now asleep", Titania

At the time I dismissed the question a little glibly (I am embarrassed to say), replying by saying that one of the intentions for the production was to speak with, and to, our wider community about biculturalism in our school. I suggested to the language teacher that a play containing or concerning Asian voice might be the work of some other theatre maker but was not for me at this moment in time. However, I reflected upon my response, discussed it with my collaborators, and, although I had not been rude, I apologised to my colleague and engaged her in further conversation around her question, her provocation. I realised that in this reflection a "stop" (Applebaum, 1995) had occurred, and this stop was making me "listen a little more attentively" to the larger conversation I had been unaware of (Fels, 2012). The stop, according to Applebaum (1995) is "a moment of risk, a moment of opportunity," a moment where the individual is cognisant that "this moment matters... listen, there is a new way to engage, to respond, to interact" (Fels, 2012, p. 53).

In Fels' original work, the stop had allowed her to "open a space for listening to the ideas of children" (p. 51), but for me the conversation was to be with a respected colleague. Fels listened though, as I then did with my colleague, "with curiosity, with openness" and "with a willingness to wonder" what could be done for this student group (p. 51).

It was during this conversation that I started to comprehend the lack of a dialogue around the inclusion of an Asian New Zealand voice, in a school with many first- and second-generation Asian New Zealanders⁹⁵. I also realised that whatever work grew from this discussion and thinking could be a further response to my research question. I therefore started to consider what might be an appropriate performative response to these two provocations: of a. including the voice and perspective of Asian New Zealand; and b. continuing the collaborative, agentic work begun during ...*Dream*. Such a performative response would allow these, and other culturally-, socially-located young adults, to participate in a process aimed “at the world’s renewal not as we imagine it, but as they will come to create it” (Fels, 2012, p. 51).

7.3 Teaching & learning through drama & theatre: position, identity and curriculum

It is worth restating my research question at this point and underlining this project’s relevance to that question:

How can a drama teacher develop new dramatic-performative work that engages teacher, student and community with the aesthetic, develops social curiosity, at the same time that it meets curriculum goals?

In this next project, I aspired to investigate as many of the factors in the question as possible: with my collaborators I would be devising and writing a new play text; the text would allow for students to explore lesser seen notions of themselves and their identities; it would reflect the ambitions of the front end of *The New Zealand Curriculum* (NZC; MoE, 2007), and; allow both myself and my students room to play, explore and manipulate the aesthetic.

As I have detailed in my methodology chapter (p. 55), as a teacher I consider myself as someone with skill in the aesthetic, having worked professionally as a theatre maker. Manipulating and playing with the aesthetic is one of my strengths; marrying this activity to my still developing notion as an arts educator is part of my current, holistic development. Post ...*Dream* I reflected on my work in and with the aesthetic and specifically the new rehearsal methodologies that had eventuated to accommodate new intellectual-creative departures. The paradigm I created from work with Year 11 on *The Pohutukawa Tree* (Figure 12, p. 110), reflected the surprising departures that had been made during the rehearsal

⁹⁵ Sadly, our school had also recently been in the national press, after a videoed racist student attack (student upon student), compounded by a racist response from a teacher. To my mind at least, a conversation around pluralism, migration and shared values was needed.

processes for that play. Whatever project came next, post ...*Dream*, I hoped would be as rewarding and surprising, to one who had been in the recent past somewhat artistically habituated. I hoped that the processes undertaken (for what became *YouthQuake*) would prompt and shape new ways of working (writing, collaborating, workshopping and rehearsing) that were yet unknown to me⁹⁶.

7.3.1 A modest conversation

For the past three years, my primary in-school, inter-school collaborator had been Mary, the teacher in charge of drama at our sister school. This collaboration had been richly rewarding: I would direct, and she would fulfil the dual role of associate director (re-rehearsing and refining performance work) and production stage manager (once the performance work was in the theatre).

Once the colloquium had taken place and my thinking around Asian New Zealand voice and agentic, collaborative ways of working started to percolate, I sought my collaborator out for a conversation around what production we might undertake, after *Sweeney Todd*⁹⁷. These initial, modest conversations would eventually become *YouthQuake*.

My collaborator is a skilled writer, having written dramatic texts (full plays and scenes) for her classes and local theatre companies; she greatly enjoyed the process and results of writing, and she has, on occasion, discussed this with me. I had written modestly at University and for my classes. We both also recognised that we had come to build a strongly connected community of student actors dedicated to the aesthetic ambitions and practice of drama in our schools. Because this community of students was so strong, in part due to our engaged nurturing and focus on processes, and recognition of our people, they had become a group that we shared (both in- and out-of-class) a warm and positive relationship with, as individuals and as a collective. Consequently, we came to know our drama very group well: the practical, the personal, and the cultural. This group was more than a drama clique, it was a unique, distinctive cultural group, which we had often accidentally and explicitly observed, critiqued, challenged, and imagined in new contexts. The rich character of the school's drama culture is a very specific "context, something within which they can be intelligibly – that is, thickly – described" (Gertz, 1973, p. 14). In this quote the "they" is the student body whom we were so keen to collaborate with further.

⁹⁶ This did, resulting in new paradigm, reflecting an alternative workshop-rehearsal methodology (Figure 43, p. 204).

⁹⁷ *Sweeney Todd* was produced in 2017, between ...*Dream* (2016) and *YouthQuake* (2018).

In conversation, we realised that we were undertaking an accidental, longitudinal anthropological study, crucially from within (Geertz, 1973; Schon 1983). This has occurred, broadly, deeply, richly and “thickly” (Geertz, 1973, p. 14), across numerous productions, classes and trips away as a whanau of actors and aesthetes⁹⁸. In the final analysis, we have come to know (yet are still developing our knowledge of) our young people; such knowledge allowed me to make a proposal to my collaborator. During ...*Dream* we had used, obliquely, some of my research around performance ethnography, ethnodrama, and ethnotheatre (Alexander, 2005; Eisner, 2005; Finley, 2005; Holman Jones, 2005; Soyini Madison, 2005; Tedlock, 2005). What I therefore proposed to my collaborator was, what with our rich and broad knowledge of our group of students, that we should create a piece of performance ethnography *with* them, for the benefit of our community. This work should embrace, celebrate and reflect critically on the many positions, challenges, joys and concerns that occupied our student body today, and that we should share this with our greater school community, of parents, staff, and leadership. Such a process(es) would be able to explore the possibilities of voice, agency and autonomy, and become a way that the questions asked (at the end of ...*Dream*) might begin to be answered.

Performance ethnography sits within arts-based research practices, and allow the participants to “combine political, critical, and expressive actions centring on lived experiences locally and globally” (Tedlock, 2006, p. 469). Performance ethnography,

calls for a reflexive engagement on the part of the participants-actors/audiences to question what they accept as truth and to examine how their truths are shaped by their perspective both in and of performance, as well as in and of the cultural lives represented through performance (Jones, 2002, p. 1).

I came to think of the participants as “percipients” (O’Toole, 1992, p. 9), as those involved in the play process – directors, cast members and audience – will share collective responsibility and be “actively engaged in making the drama” and taking “part in the drama” (p. 9). This was especially true of the meaning-making. Elements of a Brechtian aesthetic, which we utilised, was most clearly seen at the play’s conclusion, where audience members are invited to close the circle of the play’s process by giving their own testimony (to the cast and fellow audience members), to become “spect-

⁹⁸ The success of ...*Dream* led to an invitation to perform at the Shakespeare Globe Centre University of Otago Shakespeare Festival, in 2017, where we won awards for both actors and performance.

actors” and to “stop” the action and comment upon it, inspired by what they have seen performed by the actors (Boal, 1974).

7.4 Performance Ethnography: interviews, collaboration, workshop-rehearsal

The use of performance ethnography in *YouthQuake* was non-normative for a major school production⁹⁹, in that the play started from within our school drama community, through three rounds of interviews with 60 students. The option of the big-budget musical, with the name recognition that a school audience might expect, was positively eschewed. Such a musical was rejected in favour of performance ethnography, which was a risky move after three years of developing a house style and creating an audience following. However, performance ethnography was the right choice at this time, and would be a way of releasing children from the “tyranny of scripts” and activate the rehearsal room as an “action site of inquiry and learning” (Fels and Stothers, 1995). I realised that working in this way might allow what Barone and Eisner described in using “different forms of representation to uniquely influence our experience and, thus... alter the ways in which we come to understand our world” (1995, p. 1).

7.4.1 Interviews

For this piece of performance ethnography, and to uncover and interrogate specific data and performance material, it would need to start with a series of interviews. At these interviews, the participants¹⁰⁰ were asked to respond to a very broad question: ‘What does it mean to be a young adult in 21st Century Aotearoa New Zealand?’¹⁰¹ Each student had a chance to respond and were invited to drift, to discuss examples of experience that were only broadly related to the question. As a result, students found themselves recounting diverse topics of concern: the #MeToo campaign and its inferences for young New Zealanders; streaming in school and how this leads to becoming labelled; the fight with parents and care-givers over choosing an arts pathway at school, rather than that which parents perceive as an academic pathway; the influence of Trumpism and the new alt-right; sexual violence; and the under-represented experience of Asian New Zealanders and rarely seen (but often discussed and imagined in popular media) tensions between family obligation and student autonomy.

⁹⁹ This is true of a senior school, however, collaborative, co-constructed play practices are more common in primary and intermediate school contexts in Aotearoa New Zealand.

¹⁰⁰ The participants were male and female, tangata whenua and Pākehā, Asian New Zealanders born in New Zealand and overseas; the broad demography of our school was well represented, as were their unique perspectives.

¹⁰¹ The collated responses can be found in Appendix H, p. 316.

Essentially, I hoped that these interviews and the work to come would allow for a “collaboration between ethnographer and community” and work “towards building community identity and foregrounding Histories” (Ackroyd & O’ Toole, 2010, p. 21). Furthermore, any work created from these interviews should

make public the often privatized, if not secularized, experiences of others. It is designed to begin the painstaking process deconstructing notions of difference that often regulate the equal distribution of humanistic concern. It makes present and visible the lived experiences of self and other; giving students, performers and audiences access to knowledge that, one hopes, will open spaces of possibility (Alexander, 2006, p. 427).



Figure 37. *YouthQuake*, 2018: left a scene about female voice; right an Asian New Zealander asks, ‘How would you draw me?’

During the interviews I kept notes, which I then collated (Appendix H, p. 316). I did so by looking for student comments that shared commonalities, across both the interviews and across students. From this, themes, such as ‘race’, ‘art for change’ and ‘Trump’, presented themselves. There were also some notable phrases that were spoken by students, and I recognised their theatrical value as lines of dialogue. A good example was “silence is a form of violence”, spoken by one student, and “labels have consequences”, spoken by another, and we “need to learn how to be better or good people” (personal communication, September, 2017). All three were tweaked and located in a scene in the final play.

7.4.2 Initial writing process

Once the words had been analysed and themed appropriately, my writer-director partner and I engaged in some discussion and improvisation. Using an iPhone and its Voice Memo application (app) we chose a theme and key words that we would like to explore and then

improvised around these, recording the work that we performed. On conclusion we then decided who felt a greater affinity for scenes we had improvised and then set ourselves the task of writing based upon that improvised recording. The recording made on the Voice Memo app was purely a guide track, and appropriate deviations were encouraged. Deviations were agreed appropriate in three ways: 1. to develop the scene and dialogue more fully, in line with concerns shared by students at the interviews, and; 2. to enrich and broaden the dramatic possibilities of the conversations into something approaching a scene, or unit of the play, and; 3. writing in such a way as to make links to other scenes, and thus make the play a satisfying whole. At this early point in the process, my writing partner was very keen to address the women's issue scene (later titled *Diminishing Women*) we started to develop, amongst others. I was very keen to work on what became known as the Art versus Science scene. We also agreed to avoid being overly self-critical, noting that if effective theatrical departures presented themselves to us, and even if these deviated from the content and tone of the original interview responses, we had licence to pursue these. Further to this, we agreed to be each other's aesthetic keeper and would be direct and honest in the feedback and feed forward we gave each other about the writing we would both undertake. We noted that it was imperative that we be open to potentially difficult conversations about scenes that we had written, prior to sharing with a cast or ultimately an audience. This was preferable to potentially exposing ourselves or students to embarrassment and risk, should we present a scene that was dramatically-aesthetically weak.

Once scenes and a script had begun to coalesce from these interviews, my fellow writer-director and I writer-director began to develop a workshop methodology to enable collaboration, which in turn impacted the rehearsal processes (Figure 43, p. 204). This would have to consider the many cultural and language backgrounds of our students, and that 50% of our student population was born overseas, as well as the nature of our general school demography. It was also crucial to us, as it had been in ...*Dream*, that we represent the language and cultures of our participants as authentically as possible, within the confines of a dramatic-theatrical product. To do so, we would need to enlist staff or students to advise, guide and write with us. Fortunately, we had willing participants: numerous Chinese-New Zealand students, one enormously keen Korean-New Zealand student, and a Korean-New Zealand staff member. Latterly, we also utilised the language skills and cultural knowledge of two Filipino-New Zealand students (student DC and student AS). This core team would take many of the ideas we writers suggested and helped frame them in a more culturally

appropriate way, whilst also translating and transliterating text and language used in specific scenes.

7.4.3 Aesthetic learning and implications for meaning, power and future action

The great benefit of working on a piece of performance ethnography was the ability, of both directors and cast, to fully manipulate the aesthetic. With dramatic products such as our 2017 musical, *Sweeney Todd*, the aesthetic is far less flexible; yes, there is some space for aesthetic departures, but the material is so consolidated in the music, in libretto form, and in the imagination of audiences, that deviation is potentially dangerous to the product's reception and enjoyment. For musicals such as *Sweeney Todd*, there are also performance rights (and performance expectations) that one agrees to adhere to when signing a contract to perform the show. For plays such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, there are no rights as the play is out of copyright, which affords the director and cast greater aesthetic freedom. However, a 400-year-old play will be well-known to its audience, and so certain aesthetic departures might be tolerated, but maybe not too many in a school context. As for our own play, for *YouthQuake*, the rules around the aesthetic and audience engagement were quite different.

Both myself and my fellow writer-director enjoy the less realistic/naturalistic forms of the aesthetic, and especially those utilised in drama and theatre. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, we had greatly enjoyed playing in the aesthetic with Matua T, by creating rituals founded upon Tikanga Māori and given theatrical weight and impressiveness by allying tikanga with the use of physical theatre. For *YouthQuake*, we were keen to return to exploring the convention of physical theatre again, especially after the more normative practices we executed in our 2017 production of *Sweeney Todd*. Our chosen theoretician of choice, therefore, became Bertolt Brecht and his stylised approach to theatre, with a focus on an episodic, non-linear plot, and meta-theatrical elements (where the audience are made quickly aware that what they are watching is theatre, and all pretence of reality is dispensed with). These elements were both textual and seen in the direction. My aesthetic ambitions for *YouthQuake* partly reflected Schechner's vision of a Brechtian approach in which theatre is used as an "analytical or dialectical instrument" used "for a critique of society" (Schechner, 1985, p. 106). The dialectical element was evident and executed in the final Greek Salon scene, where thesis (text/performance) met antithesis (audience testimony), resulting in synthesis (new ways of seeing/addressing student and society's issues, concerns and challenges).

7.4.4 Exploring the aesthetic afresh

Part of the decision to undertake a PhD was to engage in research and practice that would challenge me to consider how I worked as a teacher: to find space for personal aesthetic development, impacting both my students and me. I aspired to create work with my collaborators that impacted audiences in part due to its visible “Aesthetic merit” (Richardson, 2000a, p. 254), and that allowed for “embodied aesthetic practice coupled with a descriptive knowledge of lives and the conditions of living” (Alexander, 2006). I wanted the work to reflect Boal’s instruction that “‘aesthetic communication’ means communication through the sense and not through reason alone” (p. 49). To activate the senses (of both cast and audience) and to communicate issues through the embodiment of data was crucial to the success of *YouthQuake*.

As educators and as artists, individuals can fall into habits, which can be reflected in the aesthetic tropes observed in their work. My ambition was to find new ways of seeing and doing in my creative teacher role, which would push me from what had become an aesthetically normative way of working. Each of the three projects I have undertaken I believe have done so, but in quite different ways.

However, as has been discussed in the Methodology section, and elsewhere, the aesthetic is an elusive creature: comprehending it, manipulating it and reflecting on aesthetic product has proved a taxing yet stimulating endeavour. Complicating my work has been my recognition that the aesthetic works on numerous levels: in pre-text, performance text, workshop and rehearsal, and final performance product reception. A new dramatic work might allow for a reassessment of the relationship to learning through the aesthetic, but there is also learning about the aesthetic, which is also different to aesthetic learning; all three were experienced by my students and me. These distinctions were first discussed in *The Pohutukawa Tree* (Project #1). In *YouthQuake* (Project #3), the aesthetic was a new word to many cast members, but one that was explicitly discussed, explained and explored. The power of the aesthetic in *YouthQuake* was its availability from the very start of the process to be used to shape and frame student concerns and arguments that would ultimately be communicated to an audience. Meaning-making, communication, and reception were more explicitly and broadly (and effectively) enabled and delivered through this aesthetic journey than, arguably, the previous two projects (*The Pohutukawa Tree* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*), and this will be discussed further.

For Gavin Bolton (1984), the aesthetic is simply the “way of looking at something” (p. 144), an approach, an artistic methodology, or the learning that occurs as you pass through the aesthetic. Furthermore, Bolton explains that the nature of aesthetic intention is “to expose the inner meanings of an event, to indicate universal implications” and that “The aesthetic intention of drama then is concerned with essences” (p. 145), which starts to hint at how students might learn about the aesthetic. He also recognised that “aesthetic meanings are felt rather than comprehended” (p. 147), which intimates aesthetic learning. Overall, “the potential for the aesthetic is always present” (p. 152). Elliott (1973) also guides my thinking about aesthetic learning, when he suggests that “Imagination breaks the domination of our ordinary habits of conception and perception – including aesthetic perception – which seems to bind us absolutely to the given world” (p. 113).

7.4.5 Portrait of an Artist

One of the more remarkable realisations that occurred for me during the workshop and rehearsal process for *YouthQuake* was around the unfortunate marginalisation of Asian New Zealanders who have a Filipino heritage. Our Korean and Chinese New Zealand students involved in production, and in school, are both recognised as ‘priority learners’ to our senior leadership, but our Filipino New Zealand community rightly felt themselves to be a unique cultural group and asked to be treated as such. At the play’s outset, myself and my writing/directing partner knew that we would be writing in Korean and Mandarin (with help from translators), as well as English. However, during rehearsals, it became apparent that the voice of Filipino-New Zealanders should be and could be heard. The inclusion of their voice came about through student intervention and agency and is a positive example of the way workshops and rehearsal were conducted. In essence, as an approach for a scene called Portrait of an Artist was being devised (for the benefit of English-, Mandarin- and Korean-speaking actors), two Filipino-New Zealand student actors (DC and AS) approached myself and my co-writer/director to suggest that the scene could also be undertaken in Tagalog. Tagalog is one of 230 plus languages spoken in the Philippines and is the language of Government and officialdom. My writer-director partner and I were heartened that these students could feel confident enough to ask for their language and culture to be respected by inclusion, which they did with directness and respect.

And so, a fascinating process of aesthetic workshopping and rehearsal began. With the text, four languages and seven students, we collaborated to find an aesthetic approach to this scene

– Portrait of an Artist – so that it could be shaped into a performance. The text itself (Appendix I) was written by Mary, my fellow writer-director, but she was keen that I direct it. Originally written in English, along with my student actor-collaborators we slowly translated the text into Korean, Mandarin and Tagalog.



Figure 38. *YouthQuake*, 2018: Student AS (left) and Student DC (centre right) in Portrait of an Artist

This also involved collaboration at home, especially for our Filipino-New Zealand students, who worked with parents and family to perfect their Tagalog translation.

My desire that the scene be fully understood in all four languages led me to use a performative idea of choreography, and a creative choice to place the same scene at intervals throughout the play, in a specific language running order. The order of scenes (across the play) we found through experiment that worked best was Korean-Tagalog-Mandarin-English. By finishing in English, we were able to draw the threads of all the previous scenes together, and resolve any confusion, in one final, satisfying moment for the majority English-speaking audience. The scene was performed as a monologue, directly to the audience, clearly recognising their presence; this, in part, reflected some of the Brechtian attributes of the aesthetic we had chosen to explore.

The effective performative decision of utilising choreography resulted in a series of stylised, gestural movements for each performance of the scene, identical in each regardless of the language. This allowed a potentially confused audience to recognise the common experience of the actors, regardless of language or cultural differences. In fact, the scene(s) was remarked upon by numerous audience members, who travelled from initial confusion and discomfort through to a satisfying resolution as the final, English version was performed.

The first noteworthy (repeatable) choreographic action occurred on the first line of the monologue: “Today, I am an artist.” On this line each actor leaned forward and in a sweeping movement, left to right, flicked through the pages of an artist’s sketch book, showing the completed art works within to the audience. A few lines later, the actor then revealed that s/he had been “told to go back to Asia”, in which moment s/he turned and pointed dynamically offstage, back towards the point of entry for the scene. A few lines later the scene had grown in tension and frustration for the actor narrating the monologue, climaxing at the line, “because while I am still labelled as different, I have somehow also become all the same.” On the final three words of this sentence, the actor tore a sketch s/he held (of her/himself) in two: the first tear on “all”; second tear on “the”. On the third and final word – “same” – the actor threw the paper into the air and let it fall as confetti. On the final line of the monologue, “How would you draw me?”, the actor repeated the very first move, a sweeping movement flicking through the pages of an artist’s sketch book. When the final actor performed the monologue and its final line (in English), she did so ahead of a raised platform upon which stood the three other actors who had performed the monologue earlier, in Korean, in Tagalog, and in Mandarin.



Figure 39. *YouthQuake*, 2018: ‘How would you draw me?’

Aesthetically and philosophically, the scene and the actors in performance were drawing attention to the shared space of school and the commonality of their experience. Their performance drew attention to the casual racism of their peers, their dislocation in the country

of their birth or migration, and the tension between a firmly indigenous culture at home and the multicultural experience of school. What I discovered through the process of workshopping and rehearsal, and through performance, was that it was efficacious to discomfort the audience. This was achieved by initially performing the scene in languages other than English, which in turn increased the audience's tension across the initial three scenes; from initial confusion to growing realisation, we were able to position the audience as having a comparable experience to that described by the students in the monologue. The experience was analogous to walking a mile in another person's shoes; the actor, the monologue, provoked empathy, the audience had a somatic response, recognising "Who we are" and of our "connectedness with and commitment to our surroundings, human and nonhuman" (Bishop, 2006, p. 118). Bishop explains that being involved "somatically means to be involved bodily-that is, physically, ethically, morally, and spiritually" (p. 130).

7.4.6 Aesthetic collaboration

As a younger director I had always been driven by a singular theatrical conceit, or concept, and all aesthetic decisions had had to be mediated through this. If it did not, whether it was my suggestion or a creative collaborator, it would be discounted. As I grow older and my knowledge, processes and technique improve – and my collaborative-pedagogical heart eclipses my selfish aesthete – I recognise the folly of such an approach. Miles Gregory, a fellow director and aesthete, once declared that he "makes all aesthetic decisions as late as he can"¹⁰² (M. Gregory, personal communication, December 3, 2015), as by that point most factors influencing aesthetic decisions are known, and thus a better outcome is likely. To leave decisions late though takes confidence. However, for the last few productions, both in- and out-of-school contexts¹⁰³, I have tried to enact this idea. At the same time, I have discovered that I have become better skilled at listening to my collaborators, both staff and especially students, some of whom are charged with some quite important areas of aesthetic control and output. These students' confidence and output has grown in quality, which has in part come about because it has been made clear to them that they "share a personal stake in the issues addressed" (Finley, 2005, p. 684), and because the students are overtly "Working towards building community identity" (Ackroyd & O'Toole, 2010, p. 21).

¹⁰² Miles Gregory is the founder and artistic director of the Pop-up Globe: <https://popupglobe.co.nz/>

¹⁰³ In my spare time I run a theatre company called Four Men @ Lunch.

7.4.7 Stage Design

As I have outlined, one of the aesthetic choices was to use techniques and conventions developed by the writer and director Bertolt Brecht. Desiring a theatre that motivated change (in thought and action), Brecht wanted his audiences “to be brought to the point of realisation” (Willett, 1964); Brecht systematically politicised his drama and theatre to teach his audiences of the societal and socialist struggles that confronted them. One of the decisions undertaken to enable this in *YouthQuake* was to sit the audience in a traverse (or catwalk) configuration. By contrast, in 2017, I had decided upon the traditional end-on, or proscenium arch, configuration for *Sweeney Todd*, and a thrust staging for *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in 2016 (Figure 40, p. 193). By sitting in traverse, the audience could not help but recognise the audience facing them, and therefore to recognise the nature of *YouthQuake* as a false, constructed conceit; there was to be no “willing suspension of disbelief” (Coleridge, 1817/1983) in this production. This confrontational configuration became especially potent as we entered the last few, climactic minutes of the play, where we entered a grand debate in an imagined Greek Salon.

Some schools around Aotearoa New Zealand have generous, medium to large theatres on campus, based on the traditional proscenium arch configuration: the audience sit facing one direction, with the stage at the far end. If not a theatre then they are likely to have an auditorium that has a stage, but needs to be multi-purpose, to suit the broad and developing needs of a school. Our facilities are the latter. The space is very large and hard to wrangle as a proper theatre; however, this problem has become an advantage for our aesthetic explorations. Because of the auditorium’s large size, myself and my creative collaborators can create new performance spaces within the auditorium, sometimes ignoring how people might imagine using the space, and stage, normatively. Freedom for aesthetic exploration has been enabled by thinking outside of the box. Freedom to explore using the space in a dynamic and functional manner, making the space a better fit for its purpose. For example, for ...*Dream* in 2016 to create a parallel to the Elizabethan stages of the 16th and 17th Century, I placed the audience on three sides of the performance space (Figure 40, image a), creating a thrust stage as Shakespeare would have known. Having no space for the groundlings, the front row of each side had no seats but bean bags and cushions, and this area was the focus for actor-audience interaction, as those closest to the stage in Shakespeare’s day would have experienced. For *Sweeney Todd* in 2017, I created banked seating in a proscenium arch configuration, due to the pictorial and graphic effects needed to be communicated, as well as

the need to house a large drum revolve stage element a safe distance from the audience (Figure 40, image b). During my tenure, this was the third change of actor-audience configuration that had been attempted. Audiences were starting to recognise a playful attitude towards the spacial aesthetic; they were excited about seeing how we could reconfigure the space afresh each year, and to what purpose. *YouthQuake* was to be another positive departure around spacial aesthetics. The audience were configured in such a way as to confront and address what Bolton (1984) called “the audience’s latent sense of the aesthetic” (p. 146): Figure 40, image c.



Image a.
Act I/Scene i of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2016, with the audience on three sides (thrust staging).



Image b.
The closing moments of *Sweeney Todd*, 2017, photographed from the centre right position of the audience, end-on (proscenium arch).



Image c.
Mini-Labels from *YouthQuake*, 2018, in which you can see one side of the audience, the photo having been taken from the other (traverse staging).

Figure 40. Image a-c and comparative staging of the author's school productions

7.5 Vision, power & dominant voice: participants or teacher?

Questions of control, of dominance, of aesthetic arbitration, are problematic for the arts educator. Aesthetic arbitration (after Runco & Pritzker, 1999) is my own term, and by it, I mean the position the lead teacher-practitioner places themselves in, between the numerous, competing – sometimes conflicting – agendas, voices and points of view amongst the creative participants. Between the actor and the text, between technology needs and the director, between co-writers, and so on. Not all decisions can be democratically resolved, nor can they always incorporate various, conflicting points of view; ultimately one person does sometimes have to make the final decision – to arbitrate over the aesthetic. As Runco & Pritzker (1999) detail, that for groups who collectively “are notoriously poor at exercising good taste consistently over time” (p. 332):

There is interesting anecdotal evidence suggesting that collaborative musical, theatrical, and dance groups tend to function more creatively when they are able to explicitly appoint an “aesthetic arbiter” who is given the responsibility and power to make the final aesthetic judgements relevant to a particular creative project (Runco & Pritzker, 1999, p. 332).

The teacher’s first duty in a context such as this, however, is to allow the student as much opportunity, as is feasible, to enjoy student *voice*, *autonomy* and *agency*. However, the teacher knowledge of the aesthetic is arguably far more developed, refined, and comprehensive than the students. As a teacher I felt the internal struggle, between allowing the students’ voice to be heard at its fullest, versus knowing I needed to curtail that voice at points to make something that would aesthetically satisfy an audience. I was again feeling the “double tug” described by Schechner (1985), as described in *The Pohutukawa Tree*, between a rewarding aesthetic *process* and a quality final dramatic aesthetic *product*.

7.5.1 Autocours

An example of this ongoing tension presented itself quite late in the workshop/rehearsal process. As my writer-director colleague and I had progressed through rehearsals, we realised that we were becoming overly dominant in the rehearsal room, to an ever-greater extent. To remedy this, and to reassert student voice and agency, we invited the students to create a performative act all on their own, with zero input or influence by either of us. There was a need to re-“democratise the classroom” (Alexander, 2006, p. 424) for the students, and to allow the students to regain their position in a piece of “Activist art”, by allowing the students

acts of “self-expression or self-representation as a way of promoting voice and visibility among participants and of making the personal political” (Felshin as cited by Finley, 1995, p. 684).



Figure 41. *YouthQuake*, 2018: two students look on concerned as a group of Pākehā writers presume to write their Asian Experience

The purpose and scope of the student process was predicated upon the “Autocours”¹⁰⁴ method, undertaken by students at the Jacque Le Coq school in Paris in 1968, and still executed to this day. As Simon McBurney, founder of the theatre company Complicite, described:

Everyday for an hour you will teach yourselves. And it was called autocours...

There is a part of the day where you are obliged to get into a group and work out what it is you are being taught, which I find fascinating (McBurney, 1994, p. 19).

Student leaders were established, and the process began with dedicated chunks of time on a Sunday rehearsal. Initially, during this time, discussion groups and topics of interest established themselves, within which issues were explored. It eventuated that two topics were

¹⁰⁴ Autocours is literally self-teaching and a sharing of knowledge. During the May 1968 riots in Paris, many of the teaching staff at Jacque Le Coq’s drama school came out in solidarity with the student body. When the students returned, they had to teach themselves and each other as the teaching staff had not returned to work.

most concerning to the students and so it was that two performance groups (about 30 students in one group and 40 in the other) manifested. They workshopped during rehearsals, including dedicated time on the three-day production camp. However, I started to feel conflicted: Mary and I were keen to learn what the students were doing so that we could consider how it would fit in to the overall narrative, and we were also keen to see if it was of a standard to be included. With about three weeks till production the two student groups shared their work: one performance was focused around the tensions of being Māori; the other looked at sexual violence in quite a direct and shocking way. As the aesthetic arbiter I was struck with a dilemma: to my mind neither piece could be shown in the final performance. The reasons were that the first performance was poorly structured and inconsistently performed, and to correct the structure and inconsistency would take a great deal of teacher input (to a degree negating the agency of the students) and rehearsal time. The second performance was too shocking, too confrontational for the predicted audience who would be experiencing it; it also jarred with where the agreed aesthetic boundaries for any audience confrontation would be.

My colleague and I watched both pieces objectively. We prefigured the viewing with words of warning to the students that we would, as aesthetic kaitiaki (guardians), have the final say as to which performance would be included, if included at all. In discussion, post-viewing, we both quickly agreed that we could not include either performance for the reasons that I have outlined. We returned to the students to share the bad news; but what eventuated was a very positive conversation. In the time that my colleague and I had left to discuss the work, the students – having viewed each other’s work – had talked amongst themselves and come to a similar realisation, comparable to the rationale that we shared. We also shared the sentiment, and students agreed, that ‘devised work does not have to be included in the final performance piece to have been of aesthetic-educational value to the students.’¹⁰⁵ Exploring the aesthetic with their ‘teachers’ trust’, being ‘given space and time to workshop ideas that had not been mediated by curriculum’ needs, and being ‘respected as adults’ by their teachers were all reasons that the student-actors gave, explaining how (although disappointed) they were grateful for the experience¹⁰⁶.

¹⁰⁵ This reflects a comment by a teacher-mentor, Christine Morgan, who once stated that “not everything has to be assessed to be of educational value.”

¹⁰⁶ When I first started as a director, around 90% of what occurred in rehearsal found its way onto the stage in the final production. Today only 60% of what is rehearsed is in the final production. Essentially, I am workshopping and experimenting far more than I once did.

However, there were times when an idea was given deeper, more penetrating, effectiveness by the inclusion of student voice and agency at the heart of the process.

7.5.2 Diminishing Women and Home

In contrast to giving over the process entirely to students, as was outlined in the previous section, two key scenes were undertaken using an alternative process. For the two scenes in question – Diminishing Women and Home – an approach was used that was sensitive to the specific needs of the participants. The approach was to recognise and embrace a multicultural sense of the cast and company, but not to overly intellectualise this recognition but rather physically action a response. As Cahnmann-Taylor & Souto-Manning (2010) had recognised, “In the fields of multicultural teacher training and research, we believe too much attention has been given to intellectual considerations and too little to other modalities, including the physical and the imaginative” (p. 22).

Diminishing Women was a scene written by my co-writer Mary, based upon testimonies given by female students at the initial interviews, in 2017. In these interviews, the female students had reflected upon troubling interactions. These testimonies included, but were not limited to, issues such as being sexually demeaned or diminished; reducing women to just their gender and sex; being questioned over their relationship choice; society’s requirement that women dress in a way so as to mediate male reactions; sexual abuse; generational tension in the response to the politics of LGBTQi+; and being a young woman in the age of Trump. In response to the two drivers of aesthetics and student voice, Mary wrote a scene that was rich in its use of features of Brechtian theatre and positioned the female testimony(s) front and centre. The Brechtian theatre feature’s Mary’s writing and direction included were a polemical dialectic; stylised character and role creation; the use of *gestus* (Figure 46, p. 213); and a presentational (as opposed to representational) acting performance style (Mitter, 1992; Willett, 1964). To both honour the female students, and to position student voice, Mary worked with the students in a way that was contrary to the normative pattern of work we two had established for this process and production. In essence, she had a closed-door policy for this scene, protecting the privacy of the female students who acted in the scene, minimising their risk and potential harm. In this safe context, the young women could speak without fear of mediation by a dominating male counterpoint. The challenging student testimonies in the written text could then be unpacked further and drilled down into in real depth, allowing for further conversations that became further dialogue and stage action.

Numerous students nominated themselves to be in this scene, primarily because they had been the students who had initially expressed the words during the interviews that became the bedrock of the text for this scene. Mary then undertook rehearsals alone, without any male members of the cast or crew in attendance. Then, once the scene was ready to share, Mary and the cast in the scene held a formal performance in front of the full cast and technical team. Formal, because the scene had been created outside of the normal frame of workshop and rehearsal, and because of the students' absence, and what some students perceived as a somewhat secretive process. This piqued maximum interest, much like the opening night of a highly anticipated production. The scene – *Diminishing Women* – was received with huge enthusiasm by all assembled: the hot-housing of the scene, its creation in private, allowing for a genuine space to share and examine the testimonies by these young women, had eventuated in a scene that was rich, sad, angry and poetic, and remarkably theatrical. Furthermore, it was a scene that was remarked upon by many female audience members especially, who attended the full performances later in the season.

The second scene, which was noteworthy for its atypical genesis, was a scene entitled *Home*. *Home* was also based on the student testimony uncovered at the interview stage and was written by me. However, this time the testimony came from both international students and recent migrants to Aotearoa New Zealand. Their testimonies spoke to the students' shared sense of dislocation, isolation and alienation, and also the pressures that came from family in their home country to remember where they had come from, as the student developed a sense of identity divorced from their original home.

Having played microcosmically with scenes partially written and performed in languages other than English, I felt that it was important to honour the cultural background of our Korean- and Chinese-New Zealand students, macrocosmically. To do this I decided to write a scene based upon the students' testimony, shared at the interview stage, and then have these transliterated into Korean and Mandarin; there was to be no English language used in the scene whatsoever. The majority English-speaking audience response to the scene would have to be through observation of the language of gesture, facial expression and semiotics. Through workshopping and then rehearsing the material, the three actors in *Home* were directed to play the scene boldly: in body and face; in gesture and relationship to props and set pieces. The dialogue of the scene saw two students – one Korean, one Chinese – in Aotearoa New Zealand calling or Skyping home (Korea, China), whilst a parent in a respective home country responds to each student's desire to stay in Aotearoa New Zealand.

They wish to stay as they are starting to develop a sense of themselves as a young adult, exploring autonomy and agency, and able to investigate a sense of self outside of the frame and obligation of family.

Taking the ambition one step further, the scene that became Home (Figure 51, p. 224) was positioned as the penultimate scene in the play, being played prior to the Greek Salon, which concluded the play. By placing Home at this point in the play, the co-writers/directors were saying that this issue, this tension for young adults, originally from overseas, was of incredible value for all percipients.

7.5.3 Issues of truth

During the workshopping and rehearsal process for both *Diminishing Women* and *Home*, and after the scenes had been staged and watched by an audience, I recall making a note in my reflective journal that was concerned with issues of truth. Unlike fully verbatim theatre texts such as *Verbatim* (Harcourt, 2014) or *The Laramie Project* (Kaufman, 2001), where the original words of the participants are performed verbatim, word-for-word, in these two scenes in *YouthQuake* the original words of the students had been filtered through the writer-director's biases and aesthetic preferences. I was conflicted: was I serving my own aesthetic, performative, political goals or serving the students' needs? As I reflected, I recalled the words of Bolton (1984), who reminded me that

What a teacher has to appreciate is that the children taking part in drama do not set out with an intention to gain new insights, to break habits of conceptions and perceptions. It is in this respect that drama education differs fundamentally from traditional pedagogy. The participant's mental set in entering drama is not an 'intention to learn'. It is an intention to create or take part in or solve something (p. 153).

In light of Bolton's words, I reminded myself that the students were not also studying for a PhD, nor practising for an examination, but with an open heart and mind they were engaged in a process to help elucidate their sense of a world renewed. Nothing more. Further allaying some of these concerns were two facts: in *Home* students were invited to take control of the transliteration of the text, further rooting the writing in their personal narratives and experience; in *Diminishing Women* the young women who spoke many of the words that became the text were in the rehearsal room with Mary, directly mediating what was acceptable to edit, change, add and delete from the text. However, concerns still remained;

but a solution of sorts appeared: there was a recognition that I am still learning how to build ways of creating work with students, and I do not need to have an immediate solution to this tension, but rather be open to what opportunities may arise that enable an aesthetic-performative and teaching response to the concerns. As Cahnmann-Taylor & Souto-Manning recognise,

Whether we are challenging test-driven curricula, administrative decisions that may be culturally biased, or our own assumptions about diverse learners and their families, our work as multicultural educators is never done. There is always a blind spot left to be revealed, always a curricular change to make learning more inclusive and democratic (2010, p. xiii).

7.6 Plot & content

A full, detailed articulation of what is in the play *YouthQuake* will not be given here, but rather a useful overview and contextualising. The play itself was a patchwork of disparate yet interconnected scenes, in which students explore their sense of self, of place and of connection to one another and the world around them. The majority of the scenes find the students either under tension, experiencing “friction or strife”, or experiencing “tensiveness” (Bacon, 1979). The overall intention of the play was to address “the actions of those elements and attributes of social relations”, challenging whether the students should maintain the “social systems or seek to transform them” (Bacon as cited in Alexander, 2005, p. 420).

Some scenes, such as a The Portrait of an Artist (Figure 38, p. 188), were repeated at intervals, in this case in different languages. This was done in order to speak to as wide a range of audience members as possible. Scenes such as Writing the Asian Experience (Figure 41, p. 195) were mostly written in English, but with a Brechtian critique performed in Mandarin from the position of, and implicating, the audience. This idea was employed to prefigure the final scene, in the Greek Salon (Figure 49, p. 217). Further scenes, such as the opening scene Comfort, as well as Positive Role Models and Female Advances, all addressed pressing issues that were universally shared, performed by the cast of students, primarily utilising physical theatre as a theatre form:

- Comfort – dealt with the disenfranchised voice of young adults desperate to be a part of the discourse in local and world politics;
- Positive Role Models – was concerned with the renewed rise of bigotry and the emergence of the alt-right in the time of Trump;

- Female Advances – reflected upon the rapid progress of women in society clashing with a sudden resurgence of misogyny.

Weaving all the disparate scenes together in the role of a comic narrator was a Greek historical figure, Archimedes. Placed onstage, in a bath surrounded by bath toys and shower gels and soaps, Archimedes commented upon the action, unpacked complex notions and prefigured scenes to come. This character also led the final scene in the Greek Salon, where he invited the audience to fully embrace their role as “spect-actors” (Boal, 1974), as they were invited to comment upon the words and action of the previous two hours.

7.7 Percipients’ reactions – immediate and wider

The “percipients” (O’Toole, 1992) involved in the production regularly shared a range of reactions, and these occurred throughout the process, differing in nature across the three *thirds* of workshop, rehearsal, and performance (section 7.8.1; Figure 50, p. 220). Time is an important factor when considering the nature of any critical response; a student’s critique is mediated by where/when they find themselves in the process.



Figure 42. *YouthQuake* cast and creative team at the annual production camp, June 2018

7.7.1 Process

The process undertaken for *YouthQuake* was unique and challenging, and unlike any process previously undertaken by either myself, my collaborator, cast or my specific institution.

The process began with excitement high amongst the aesthetic participants (minus the audience). It was high as the possibilities are boundless¹⁰⁷, and the initial processes including interviewing students – and positioning student voice and creating agency – are exciting: students had not experienced the proposed method of aesthetic-creative inquiry and execution that was being proposed by their teachers, in the role of writer-directors. Thus, each could interpret what was to eventuate in their imaginations in their own idiosyncratic way.

However, as we reached the midway point of the process (see Figure 43, p. 204), which fused rehearsal with “workshop” (Schechner, 1985), students started to share concerns and fears, for a very simple reason. Although I am not a teacher who ‘makes things up as I go along’ I was of course, along with my collaborator Mary, doing exactly that; but for the right reasons. The process (or cycle) we two created with the student-participants was one of interviews/discussion-writing-workshopping-refining-rewriting-rehearsing-sharing with students-refining-rewriting-rehearsing-consolidating-performing, as seen in Figure 43.

Unfortunately, by the midway of the process, some student fears and uncertainty found form in criticism and moaning about the nature of the process by the cast. This led to me having to write a message, which was emailed to parents and posted to Facebook on May 14, 2018:

Hi team,

I hope you guys are all well & hearty; however, I have come to understand that some of you do have some concerns and grumbles, for which I have sympathy. This is why I write.

This rehearsal process is unlike anything I have attempted before. There is no roadmap; no text to read on the first day of rehearsal; no video to watch for context. Without these, it can be a challenge to see where we are headed.

¹⁰⁷ One of my inspirations is how the artist George Seurat, in Stephen Sondheim’s Musical *Sunday in the Park with George*, considers an unmarked page as he begins an artwork: “White. A blank page or canvas. His favorite. So many possibilities.” Sondheim & Lapine (1984).

Please understand that... We are attempting to do something here that is new, unique, and with students at the heart of it. We hope you will continue to join us in that journey.

Nga mihi mahana,

Mr Brown.

The notion that we as creative leaders lacked a ‘roadmap’, and that there was no text to read on the first day, was for the students a concern; but myself and my collaborator it was a real advantage: allowing creative flexibility and responsiveness. Our job was to communicate the truth of this advantage, effectively, to the students. What eventuated was orally describing, and then roughly sketching, the paradigm on the next page (Figure 43). The paradigm was quite basic in its first iteration/first description to students and became more fully formed as time went on.

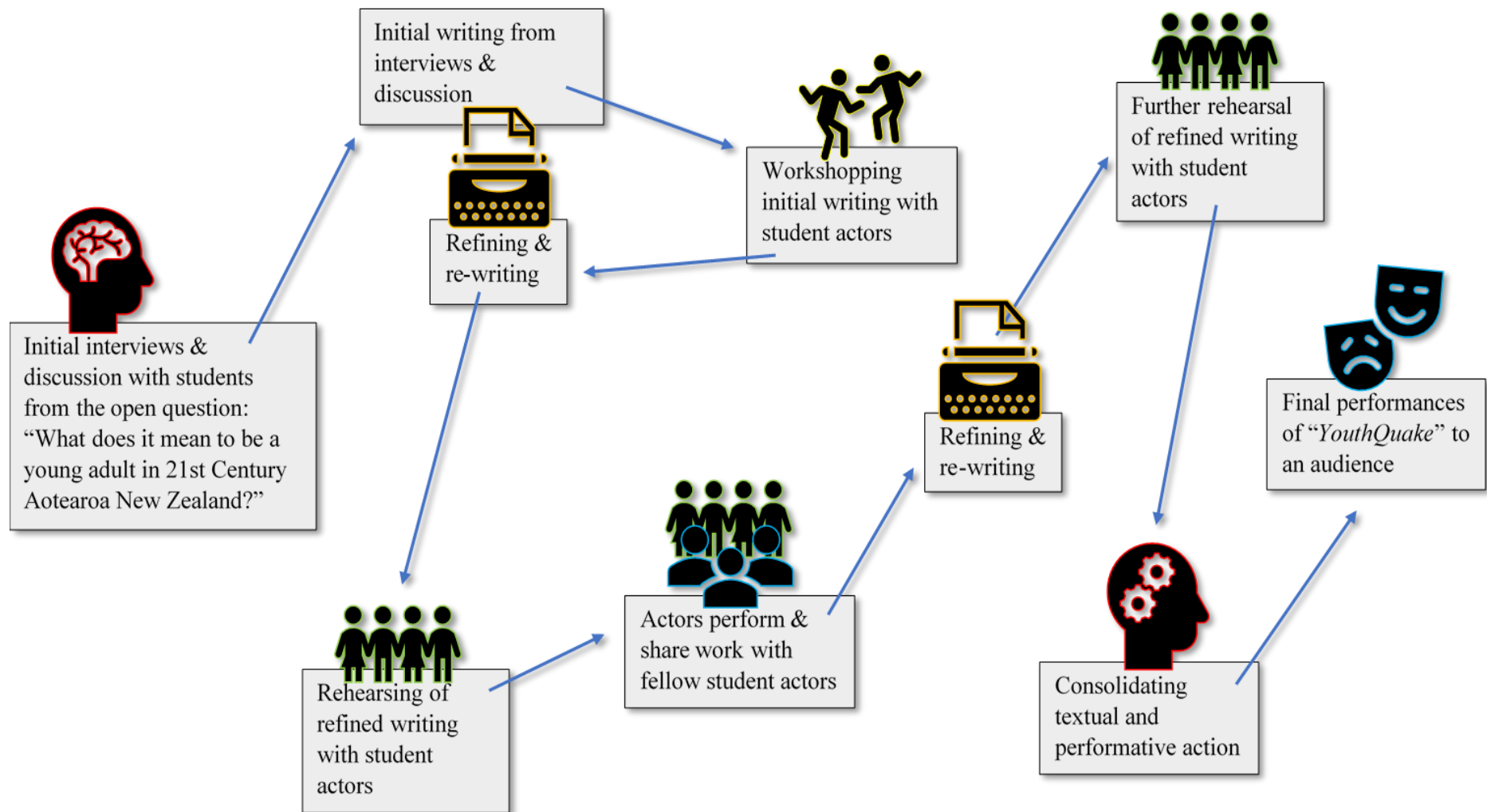


Figure 43. The *YouthQuake* creative process

7.7.2 Cast/student reactions

The reflections of the cast were interesting. Both formally and anecdotally the students responded that, in the main, they had not enjoyed the process that resulted in the production, although they had been invigorated by the performances. The most rewarding scene for the students was generally described as the Greek Salon scene, as receiving such direct, immediate and authentic feedback from an audience, whilst onstage in a performance with their peers, had made them feel that their efforts were being rewarded with respectful appreciation (personal communication, August, 2018). The student cast who had been involved in other more normative school rehearsal processes and products expressed that they had missed the predictable patterns of workshop-rehearsal-performance, and that to try and discern a tangible endpoint, ahead of the performances, caused uncertainty and stress (personal communication, August, 2018). This expression of fear reflected the antecedents to the message written by me, detailed in the previous section (7.7.1). In my reflective journal I wondered how I could square this particular circle, and provide both a rewarding, enriching process that matched the experience of the performances.

7.7.3 Audience reactions

Our audience reactions came in two varieties: those audience members who responded during the Greek Salon scene (at the play's end) and those that made contact after the performance. The most striking commentary of audience members who spoke whilst in attendance are detailed in the section entitled The Saturday matinee (7.9.4). In this section I would like to focus on the responses that came to me in the form of email, from parents, teachers, theatre makers and people who had only a modest connection to the school.

The first respondent wrote an email that reflected many that I received during and after *YouthQuake*, as well as comments spoken directly to me. This individual noted that having returned home "from the show with family and some other MoE colleagues of mine" she explained how debates had continued amongst her friends and whānau. She felt that the play had been "An incredibly powerful piece of work", articulating "phenomenal messages that so many schools and young people across Auckland – nationally really – would really benefit from hearing" (J. Tod, personal communication, July 25, 2018).

Another response was from a parent and artist, who attended the Wednesday evening performance. This parent described how she was "blown away with both the message and the performance" with "our thoughts provoked and very impressed with the evening as a whole".

The parent went further, reflecting on how the production successfully and positively positioned what it means to live an artistic life:

As an artist myself, and having raised artistic children, I feel frustrated that there has always been an undercurrent in our society around our creativity being a second-class career option. I felt so empowered both personally and for my children after hearing the messages around the wonder of the fine arts. We also came away determined to be more aware of racism, to continue celebrating difference, and also to continue encouraging our kids to pursue their passions (N. Murray, personal communication, July 27, 2018).

A second parent focused on the empowerment that her child had experienced, through being involved in the process and production. The parent articulated both the social challenges faced by her child and how the process had provided the child with a shield and a tool:

talking about prejudices and things that kids face, my son has been given heaps of stick from the rugby boys about being in the production: the usual taunts about someone who favours the arts, but he has held his head up high and told them how fantastic it is to be a part of it all and I think that inner strength and confidence to speak up has come about because of the subject matter you are dealing with (L. Wadsworth, personal communication, July 27, 2018).

One of many teachers who attended, reflected on a third theme: how teachers can blindly label students based on minimal evidence. Whilst noting that “The writing is so clever, and I was thoroughly entertained” she also reflected that the writing and performance resulted in her lying

awake for ages last night thinking about the messages of the show. As teachers it is all too easy to categorise or stereotype students without getting to know their stories/backgrounds properly, even if you have the best of intentions (K. Pearson, personal communication, July 26, 2018).

One respondent, who was involved at a senior level in New Zealand Opera and professional direction and theatre-making, wrote as he “just wanted to get in touch to say how honoured and privileged I was to attend last night’s gala evening of *YouthQuake*. In response to the performance and production he continued, stating that

It was great to see such a vibrant and thought-provoking piece of theatre that spoke to the crux of how young adults, and the future of our country, are addressing such issues. The great thing that I took away from it was that, although all generations of young adults seem to go through the struggles of self-identity and self-worth, it was incredibly encouraging to see the strength, support and courage you all have to not only speak up about the issue and topics raised, but also on such a large and creative platform. To the writer/directors: it is fantastic to see the way in which you have deviated from the norm of ‘traditional school productions’ and created a unique and powerful way for the students to explore and create their own narrative to deliver to an audience. It is also great to see first-hand the result of what I can imagine is incredibly dedicated work fostering such remarkable talent (A. Gordon, personal communication, July 25, 2018).

The final email came from a work colleague here at the school, who was also a parent of a cast member. In her email she recounted how

Discussions in the car after the show flowed on into the kitchen at home about the various scenes and topics presented in the compilation of vignettes. As we talked about the various scenes it became apparent that some things haven’t changed 30 years on from when my husband and I were at school – class streaming, labels, women’s rights and the conflict we sometimes have with our parents about career choices. Maybe though, we now live in a social climate (here in NZ at least!) where people, especially those who are in positions of power, are more inclined to at least discuss issues and look at alternative solutions. We LOVED how the arts, creativity and innovation were touted to be crucial components that play a relevant and very necessary role in all our lives, and that following and developing these interests should be encouraged and celebrated – hooray! This goes to show that *YouthQuake* is indeed a thought-provoking production which encourages people to start talking and share experiences and ideas (M. Cain, personal communication, July 25, 2018).

During the production week, such emails were posted to social media, to allow the student actors – who had been nervous about the process and product only a few weeks before – to gain a measure of their impact. The knowledge of these emails lingered with other knowledges, such as the direct responses in the bar from friends and whānau, after a

performance. The cast was excited and abuzz, and this impacted the delivery of the text and stage action in subsequent nights, and also fed into the Dead Donkey Improv scenes.

One final response is noteworthy in this section: that of former students of mine, who attended a rather privileged private school (my previous), close to my current school. These students were stimulated by what they had seen and the manner of its aesthetic presentation. However, these students were also surprised and shocked by the play's content, revealing that they (living and studying in their bubble of relative privilege) had little idea that the issues shared in the play were even issues at all. None had come into contact with any of the issues in their experience; knowledge of this fact provoked a consideration that this dramatic work might be of only limited value beyond the bounds of this particular context.

7.7.4 Staff reactions

To gain a more penetrating insight into the processes and efficacy of *YouthQuake I* I interviewed two crucial staff members intimately involved in its creation. Mary leads the drama department at our sister school and was my co-writer and co-director; Dr H is the head of the languages department at my school and helped advise on Asian-New Zealand facets of the process and production. In regards of their positionality, Mary is an Aucklander by birth and cultural inclination; Dr H is a Taiwanese-born New Zealander, hailing from Hamilton.

During the interview I asked both teachers a variety of questions, including: those on the experience of working on the play (process and product); how they might describe the play to a colleague; the gaining of new insights and epiphanies; the challenges of working in the way that we did; new learning around society, culture and NZ identity; what they felt students and audience members might have learned during the process; and the difference between this and other productions we as a school have undertaken.

Mary was very generous in stating that she found profound satisfaction in the continuing collaboration between her and me, and the positive impact this had on student engagement and outcome, and for her own, personal learning. She found “marrying” our two sensibilities (aesthetically and pedagogically) “very fulfilling.” The opportunity and process by which we created the play and production was “very empowering personally.” Mary related how the work on the scene called *Diminishing Women* had been especially rewarding. To hear “young women speaking about their positions”, declaring “their truth” in the scene, and before that in the workshopping of text and interviews, was also empowering as a female teacher of young women, and as a woman (personal communication, October 31, 2018). Dr H

was keen to express that this was the first production that she had seen “with such strong and well-positioned student voice.” She had never encountered a production that was so “successful in its ability to incorporate Korean, Chinese and Filipino culture and language,” who are marginalised groups in our school, in New Zealand culture and social politics (personal communication, October 31, 2018). For both teachers, the positioning and exploration of minority voices through the production was part of its power and success.

On a side note, Mary recounted a modest critique of how these Asian voices were positioned, as some Pasifika and Māori students in the cast saw these voices being prioritised over their own. These students were not begrudging but felt that maybe the voices of the Pacific and tangata whenua could have been included *alongside* those of the LGBTQi+ and Asian-New Zealand community. Mary and I reflected that we had explained to the students that we recognised this tension but felt that this production was one where we specifically focused on these particular voices, so infrequently heard from or given such a platform. Mary and I both recognised that *YouthQuake* was an extension and development from the work on ...*Dream* in 2016, positioning voices in our community that were not given appropriate space and time. Dr H echoed this position, stating that she was pleased that the Asian-New Zealand voices had been heard in a manner and place where Pākehā and tangata whenua narratives were often the default artistic expression of Aotearoa (personal communication, October 31, 2018).

Mary related how when describing the play to friends, colleagues and potential audience members she always focused on the approach to creating the text and production, rather than recounting the narrative; process trumped product. She called this her “party line,” a way of best honouring those engaged in the endeavour. Mary also used the expression that she and I were “interested in doing something out of the box,” with students, and at the heart of this was “showing a respect for the students with whom we are working” (personal communication, October 31, 2018). Dr H was heartened by the opportunity given to the breadth and depth of the student community and talent in our schools. One Korean-New Zealand student especially embodied this, as he not only acted in the production, but helped in the translation of some scenes from English to Korean and created artwork used in the scenic design. Dr H described the excitement of seeing “students skilled in language and drama” being allowed to explore these talents in combination and how Mary and I enabled them to “skilfully link these skills together” (personal communication, October 31, 2018). Because of the enabling of student voice and the agency provided to the students, and the empowering of audience, it was clear to Mary that, through our production and processes, we

are reconsidering “who does the drama belong to?” When we consider the process and product of *YouthQuake*, as well as what is normative for school productions, who *owns* the drama? “Is it the company, the director, or the writers, or the creatives?” The power in the processes that was created (and resultant product) enabled all percipients to “lay claim to *YouthQuake* as their own” (personal communication, October 31, 2018). At this point, Mary and I reflected on the scene in the recently released movie *First Man*¹⁰⁸, in which Neil Armstrong trains to be the first man to land on the moon, with Buzz Aldrin. In the movie the American flag is not seen on the surface of the moon, the implication being that Armstrong and Aldrin were the first people regardless of nationality, and by extension all humankind can lay claim to their success as being a human success. By extension, philosophically Mary and I aspired to a similar laying claim to *YouthQuake*, its arguments, themes and manner of narrative-dramatic telling, by all those who created the work and attended the performances.

In regards of epiphanies and new learning, Mary expressed a joy in using the traverse staging for *YouthQuake* relating it to the creative work undertaken on *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in 2016, when we used a thrust staging. In that instance, because of the still developing relationship with our students and their unknown knowledge level, workshops were held on how to maximise the use of a thrust staging. However, we both agreed that we did not need similar workshops for *YouthQuake*, as the students had learned to become “aware of the space,” becoming “fluid” in their movement. We both realised during the interview that the cast had “prior knowledge” of how to adapt to unusual spacial configurations, and that the “background noise” of our dual aesthetic sensibility, both in class and production, had filtered down to the students and become part of their skill set. Mary also recognised that those involved in production showed ever-greater “student responsibility,” as we progressed from one production to the next¹⁰⁹, as we foregrounded student respect, trust, voice, autonomy and agency. There was also a recognition that neither of us, as writer-directors, needed to constantly “drive the bus”, and in fact “students didn’t always need direction”; a teacher was present but did not always have to find solutions or pathways (personal communication, October 31, 2018). Dr H also commented upon this and developed this observation further by saying that working in this way allowed for the students to experience a “personal

¹⁰⁸ *First Man*: Universal Pictures, 2018.

¹⁰⁹ Westlake schools have now undertaken four productions in this current relationship: *Assassins*; *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*; *Sweeney Todd*; *YouthQuake*. In 2019, the schools’ joint production was the musical, *Les Misérables*.

development and growth,” which would not have been available to them through other, more normative, school production processes (personal communication, October 31, 2018).

In regards of what was of aesthetic importance to Mary in *YouthQuake*, in comparison to previous productions, it was the use of colour, specifically the movement through the performance from basic, clean white to a multi-coloured festival of colour, by the play’s end. For Mary, the use of colour was a simulacrum which “spoke to the spectrum of themes, and issues” presented within the play (personal communication, October 31, 2018).



Figure 44. The cast in their basic white costumes (left), compared to their various brightly coloured costumes in the final scene (right)

The use of “potent, punchy” colour reminded her of a bright modernist painting by Mondrian, demonstrating a “joyousness in the face of complexity” and even “joy because of the complexity” (personal communication, October 31, 2018).

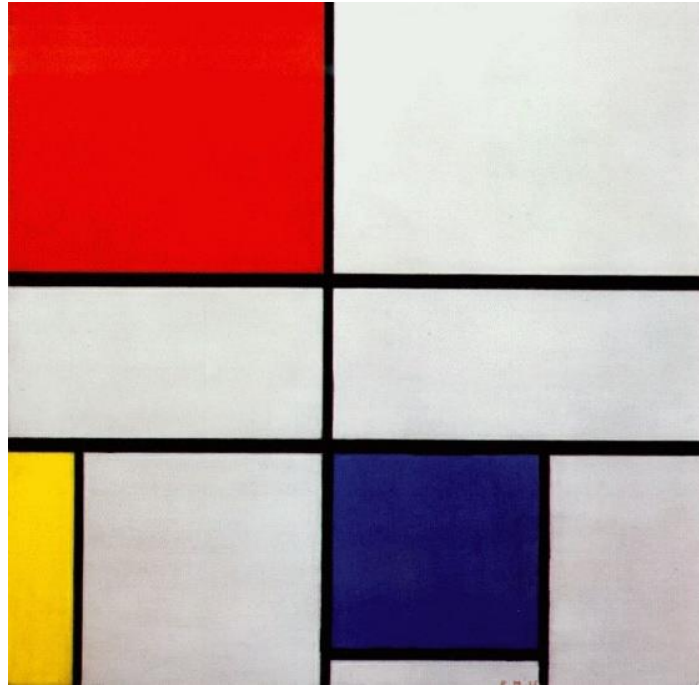


Figure 45. Composition C (No. III) with Red, Yellow and Blue, by Piet Mondrian, 1935

The spectrum of colour was also analogous of the many “nuances” that were presented in the various scenes in *YouthQuake*. These themes and nuances reflected the success of the production in its ability to show “unseen perspectives from minority groups” as Dr H described it (personal communication, October 31, 2018). Dr H also articulated that such aesthetic choices were what, in part, had enabled the play to be “successful in educating the community” about LGBTQi+, and the Asian-New Zealand experience of these students. The colour use also allowed the audience to enjoy the complexity and indicated that the arguments and issues were always in a state of flux, unlikely to resolve but rather evolve. As Mary put it, “a Rubik’s cube is no fun when it is finished” but rather it is in its state of chaos where one is faced with the challenge – that is where the excitement lies for a progressive-creative intellect (Mary, personal communication, October 31, 2018). Whilst we discussed aesthetics, Mary recognised the overt influence of Bertolt Brecht and stated that this was appropriate as “these young people are going to go on and change the world” in smaller and larger ways, so why not create a dramatic work based (in part) on the theoretical work of an avowed change-maker such as Brecht (Mitter, 1992; Willett, 1964).

Mary also commented upon the bodies that occupied the costumes and how these were used by directors and actors in a remarkable way. The use of physical theatre, allied with the issues and themes being explored, resulted in some dynamic work by these young actors. The “actors’ choice in how they used their bodies” became a semiotic statement to the audience.

The “body as sign and symbol” representing the issues and positions taken by the student actors was seen regularly, but most notably in “the women’s movement scene on the balcony” (personal communication, October 31, 2018). In this scene, the actors took on tableau positions reflecting rage, disgust, fear, hope and oppression, as suggested by a narrator’s address to the audience. Such tableaux also reflected a Brechtian aesthetic (and theory-in-action) of *gestus*, (Brecht/Willett, 1964), where an actor demonstrates a stereotypical physicality which is also a demonstration of a social attitude to a subject or object. The actors’ exploration of the physical in this scene (amongst others), predicated on their ownership of the narrative and issues being explored, was far stronger and shocking, due to their agency, autonomy, ownership, centrality and implication in the issues, when compared to other productions we had worked on together. Such semiotics combined with the narrative commitment of the actors resulted in notable, positive-affirmative “audience reactions” (personal communication, October 31, 2018).



Figure 46. Female actors execute *gestus*, reflecting the narrator’s argument

Mary latterly reflected on the various epiphanies that she experienced during the process, as did Dr H. The power found in “engaging with the Filipino-New Zealand student community” had been profoundly rewarding, Mary stated, but it did make us both ask, “did we possess a bias towards Chinese- and Korean-New Zealanders?” This is arguably because our Filipino-New Zealand community are generally so skilled in their language proficiency that we can overlook potential needs of this community. Fortunately, students from the Filipino-New

Zealand community approached us and shared possible ways to include their voice and narratives, to which we listened. Dr H reflected on how listening to these student narratives helped her reflect on her experience: much of the play “resonated” with her personal experience. We discussed how there is a “societal reductivism” embraced by some members of society, exemplified by those who have asked Dr H, “where are you from?” and when she has said “Hamilton” they pursue the question further until they are satisfied; “okay, but where: somewhere in Asia?” is an oft-heard refrain (personal communication, October 31, 2018). Dr H did feel that connotations of racism are implicit in this line of questioning, and teachers and society must be cognisant of this when unpacking and discussing identity, and positionality, with students and young adults. For the record, I stated that as a (Pākehā) first-generation English migrant, I had never been asked this question. Dr H did also wish to celebrate the “school’s culture” which is “generous, open, tolerant and accepting of all cultures”, which is a microcosm we should recognise and continue to grow outwards with our students and communities (personal communication, October 31, 2018).

Mary commented upon how the response to the Filipino-New Zealand student community was an excellent indication of how we as co-directors we were both “listening to students in a profound way,” the “manner of our attention” and “attentiveness had shifted” subtly and profoundly. Neither of us had been unthinking or dismissive, however, we learned to watch and observe and learned from our students in new ways that helped shape the performance work. For example, as Mary and I wrote the Dead Donkey Improv scenes (DDI; p. 225), we became more successful in the writing the more we listened to the unique styles, rhythms and mannerisms of the seven DDI cast members, with their various backgrounds and positionality, eventually consciously writing specifically for their unique sensibilities. On reflection, we recognised that we both had done this across the writing of the whole play, embracing the unique character of the actors who spoke the text (Mary, personal communication, October 31, 2018).



Figure 47. Archimedes (right) and an actor (in red) begin to question the cast and audience, in the Greek Salon scene

Both Dr H and Mary reflected on the success of the final Greek Salon scene, and the positive way in which the audience engaged with the actors and the debate. This scene, its construction and execution, was risky, as the creative participants ultimately had to give up control of the political-narrative thrust for the audience to contribute. But the “audience bounced back” Mary recounted, positively and generously reflecting on the performance they had just seen, drawing parallels with their own lives, and endorsing the work and its rationale for existence (personal communication, October 31, 2018). Dr H mused that the “audience reactions at the play’s end” was such a positive experience for audience and cast alike. The “meaning-making from the play for audience members” could be discerned in these moments, and it positively reflected “the power of contribution – you become part of the play.” Dr H also pointed out that the audience engagement in *YouthQuake* had been prefigured in other productions through the way that those audiences had been implicated in the action. In *...Dream* (2016) and *Assassins* (2015) there was a strong sense of the experiential and the environmental for the audience: for example, actors walking through the audience and having guns pointed at them directly by the cast in *Assassins*, or audience being endowed as guests in the opening scene of *...Dream*, or being directly engaged by the actors

in the ‘rumpus zone’ of bean bag seats¹¹⁰(personal communication, October 31, 2018). The directors’/schools’ aesthetic was clearly not one of passive reception but predicated upon a desire for profound co-constructed meaning-making and deep engagement.



Figure 48. The cast confront the audience in the final moments of *Assassins*, 2015

Finally, ideas for and around curriculum were discussed by both teachers. For Mary, a new “merged English and drama course” was clearly a possibility, due to the student enthusiasm around the processes undertaken in *YouthQuake*. Ultimately it could include more subjects than just English and drama and be across both schools. Mary has also seen an increase in students taking on the role of director, in curriculum classes, especially for the annual Shakespeare competition. Mary found that of these new directors’ concepts for their Shakespeare work, “90% are symbolic and/or abstract and physical in nature” and there was a “clear, young and experimental artistry” being explored, “provoked in our classrooms by the work on production and the viewing of the same.” For one student, there had emerged a “tangible confidence and certainty in her aesthetic self,” and she was confident in the “notion of taking creative-artistic risks.” Mary ascribed this phenomenon to a “trickle through effect from the work by the creatives and students as a whole, through this process” (Mary, personal communication, October 31, 2018).

For Dr H, the front end of the NZC had been reflected in the ways that Korean-, Chinese- and Filipino-New Zealand students were given space to participate and contribute, celebrating

¹¹⁰ The rumpus zone was a parallel to the groundlings and the pit area where audience stood, in Elizabethan theatre, and where the most direct actor-audience interaction occurred.

both their cultural homo- and heterogeneity. The process and product had allowed them to “navigate their complex worlds” and develop private and public spaces to embody and enact “personal development and growth” (personal communication, October 31, 2018).

7.8 Personal post-production reflective practice

My recollections of the processes undertaken during the production are numerous and multifaceted. The major one I had is that 2018 was to be a ‘year off’, meaning that we as a school would do a smaller, more modest work, between two years of large musicals. However, what I have now come to realise is that for myself, my community, my students and crucially my aesthetic development, this could be the most important thing that I have done in a school context, maybe might ever do; I hope not. Our ability to give voice and create agency for 60 student actors, who from a cast of 70, were given a platform to speak their various truths to an audience of their peers, parents, school leaders and the wider community was powerful.



Figure 49. *YouthQuake*, 2018: the start of the cast-audience debate at the play’s conclusion

The play concluded with a debate, in an imagined Greek debating hall, where we gave licence, through textual and performative conventions, for the audience to speak, to join the debate, to become spect-actors and speak their truth(s) stimulated by the sharing of the students’ concerns seen in the play (Boal, 1974). And they did, sharing reflections on the numerous scenes and issues and concerns raised in *YouthQuake*. Shockingly, a few speakers

from the audience were in tears as they recounted their personal narratives, their experiences in school and beyond; their anger that these young adults still had to go through such trials that they had seen outlined in the play. As a father, I also had a profoundly important breakthrough with one cast member – my own child¹¹¹. My then 12-year-old daughter, an aspiring actor, had experienced first-hand (though the process) the numerous challenges faced by her older peers. She and I could then chat about what had happened in rehearsal as we drove home, unpacking meaning(s) and implications for her and her world. I was also able to give advice, counsel and shape her performance skills through direct contact as her director, a role she always rejected in other contexts.

There were also aesthetic departures I enjoyed, which I came to recognise: in the form of collaboration, in regards of stage design, through the writing of new text, and the execution of true ensemble work (founded upon physical theatre conventions).

7.8.1 Working in ‘thirds’

As I have outlined previously, in my experience and research the norm for a school production would be to produce a show that already had an aesthetic and production history, and would be one known to its potential audience. Producing new or obscure work in a school context is risky and rare, as I first observed in the iTicket Showdown Awards scene, that begins this chapter of the research. Creating new work also creates challenges for two, key constituent groups: actors and audience. For the actors engaged in new material, there is no ‘road map’, no set of subtle instructions on how to engage with the material and process, and this created profound tensions across rehearsals, especially in what I call the ‘middle third’. In my experience, whether directing a play or musical, the process of workshopping and rehearsing a play happens in three parts, or ‘thirds’. The first third is defined by the excitement of winning a role; of connecting with friends who have also been cast; attending initial workshops and rehearsals; coming to terms with the material on a deeper level than the surface level needed for auditions. The final third is defined by the realisation of the date of first performance; the actors’ cognisance that an audience of friends, peers and others will be attending performances; that time is finite, and roles and action still must be perfected; that the whole journey will soon be over, so it is wise to enjoy it as much as is possible. In every play and musical I have ever directed the middle third of the workshopping and rehearsal

¹¹¹ I have an agreement with my headmaster that, due to the many hours I spend away from home in rehearsal, I can include my children in any production. My daughter is currently at intermediate school but will go to our sister senior school in 2020.

process, which occurs between the excitement of being cast (first third) and the excitement of the performances on the horizon (final third), is the most challenging (Figure 50, p. 224). The middle third is often characterised by uncertainty, absenteeism, ennui and disagreement; this was never so true as in *YouthQuake*. With a recognised production product, such as *Oliver!* or *The Winter's Tale*, the middle third can be mediated by experimentation and workshop, by deeper dramaturgy or research, and by knowledge of the normative expectations with a known text at this point of a process. However, with *YouthQuake*, my writer-director partner and I were still shaping and crafting material necessary to make the play a satisfying, holistic whole, whilst still trying to honour the words, emotions, honesty and narratives of our student-actor-collaborator participants. My desire to experience something new in the aesthetic, as a teacher and theatre-maker, led to tensions in my roles as writer and director, and teacher. I recall writing in my reflective journal, 'how can one work towards a self-development goal, whilst still carrying the enthusiasm and sympathy of your cast with you?'

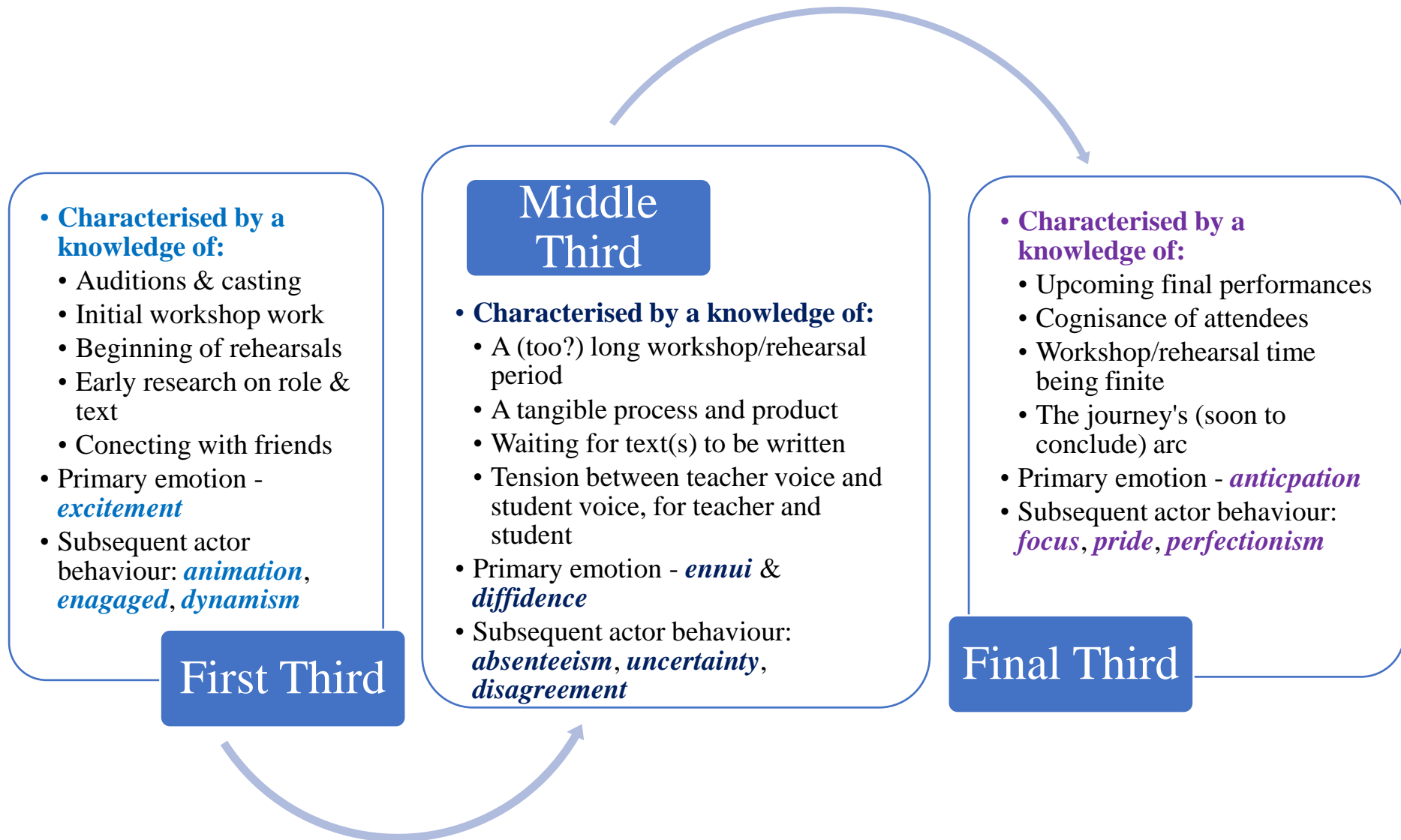


Figure 50. A rehearsal process, working in 'thirds'

7.9 Performance and audience(s)

The performance period is when and where the creative-aesthetic-explorative rubber hits the relatively fixed, product-receptive road; where text, performance, cast and technical crew encounter an audience. Jim Mienczakowski describes the encounter between performance and audience as a moment where “theatre for change” is possible, and recognises that if “we are very lucky, the audiences and performers of performed ethnography leave the room or the auditorium changed in the same way” (1997, p. 166).

However, not all audiences are equal, and production week – which lasts from the Sunday before Week 1 of Term 3 to Saturday night at the end of that same week – is a challenge of navigating the various responses of diverse audiences across seven days.

7.9.1 Assembly

The first audience was encountered on the Monday of the last week of Term 2, prior to production week. A full assembly of 2,500 young male adults sitting face on to the stage (end-on/proscenium arch configuration), where the performance is to be given. Out of context, and performing in a manner that was contrary to rehearsal, the cast of the scene Positive Role Models worked hard to carry a mostly unresponsive audience with them. The scene was chosen for its bold physical theatre, its unique poetic image-based theatre; however, this was at odds with the more prosaic interests of the students assembled. The scene received applause but was not loved by its audience. Out of context, it was hard for the watchers to understand the scene’s relevance or what it might hint at should they come see a full performance.

7.9.2 Technical and dress rehearsals

After the shock of that first Term 2 performance, students redoubled their efforts, focusing on communication and meaning-making. Through the technical rehearsals – where lighting, sound effects, properties and costumes were slowly woven into the performance – and into the final two dress rehearsals, students applied themselves to the task of making the play work. One of the more challenging unknowns through this period was what would happen in the very final scene, which we called the Greek Salon. It had been rehearsed, with directors fulfilling various roles and voices, as this was the point at which the audience would be invited and encouraged to comment upon the play, and maybe reveal some echoes, resonance, or relationship to their own lives as they live (or aspire to live) them.

However, we encountered an issue at this point, which was the reminder that theatre's primal quality is its liveness, in the tension found between cast and observer. This quality is something that almost defies the ability to rehearse for. As Jill Dolan writes, theatre is a place where "audiences are compelled to gather with others, to see people perform live, hoping perhaps for moments of transformation that might let them reconsider and change the world outside the theatre" (2001b, p.455). It is so often the synergy between the live energy of cast and responsiveness of an audience that ignites the import of a moment where shared meaning becomes possible. At the first dress rehearsal there was no public watching, beyond the directors and other staff and student participants. Therefore, the two writer-directors played the role of audience member. At the second dress rehearsal an audience of like-minded drama students was drawn from the two schools. From this audience we encouraged a few students to ask questions at the end of the performance, which they did, but these were awkward and stilted; far from an ideal process ahead of the first performance in front of paying guests at that evening's Gala Night.

7.9.3 Gala Night

The first performance was performed well by its cast and was very positively received by its audience. Each scene was well delivered, and the students' complex ideas and opinions were finding their mark, with the audience recognising their part to play and reacting, responding appropriately. With the Greek Salon scene approaching the tension in the cast started to rise; both my writer-director collaborator and I noticed it. The actor playing Archimedes (who acted as narrator and also introduces the Greek Salon scene) performed his final narration with real heart, moving many in the audience; he was clearly working hard in the hope that he could affect the audience, engage them in such a way as to make their involvement in the scene to follow inevitable. He need not have been fearful. As the Greek Salon scene began, the audience quickly recognised their obligation and were happy to contribute. However, what is noteworthy is how their responses affected our student cast members. The audience spoke with surprising candour and directness, detailing their sadness at seeing young adults struggle with issues they themselves had struggled with. Some who spoke pledged themselves to do better, to be more responsive, supportive, and to never take things for granted. In the exchange, it felt as if the audience recognised that they were engaged in a piece of Activist art, which according to Felshin (1995), is characterized by an

- Innovative use of public space to address issues of socio-political and cultural significance
- Encouragement of community or public participation in arts making as a means of effecting social change
- Engagement of community participants in acts of self-expression or self-representation as a way of promoting voice and visibility among participants and of making the personal political (Felshin as cited in Finley, 2005, p. 684).

The traverse staging had made the audience aware of its role and responsibility as spect-actor; the placement of cast in the audience – implicating them in the action and argument – had created participation; the final Greek Salon debate allowed the audience to express and represent their lived experiences as they related to those shared by the cast. They had recognised, as had Finley (2006), that “art can be the catalyst for audiences to see themselves differently, to receive messages, and to find a level of understanding about people that they would have ignored in different circumstances” (p. 692).

7.9.4 The Saturday matinee

The performances continued across the week, and after the success of the Greek Salon scene on Gala Night, the cast now happily anticipated the play’s final scene. However, during the Saturday matinee there were audience members who spoke in a way that created a remarkable atmosphere, unlike any other performance. This was especially noteworthy because in previous productions Saturday matinee audiences had been smaller and relatively subdued. Amongst the speakers I will describe two. The first is a middle-aged mother of a 12-year-old girl, who reflected on the scene called *Diminishing Women*, in which young women are sexually accosted by brutal, sexist males (played by female actors in clearly false moustaches; a nod to the Brechtian, meta-theatrical aesthetic). The mother described how the tension between the two, mother and child, built up during the scene, and how the daughter drew closer to the mother. And then, just as the scene was ending, the daughter turned to her mother and said, “those women are right mum; I would do the same” (personal communication, July 29, 2017). Surprised, the mother followed up by asking, *sotto voce*, “Do you see yourself in their dilemma?” “Yes, I do, mum.” “And you feel you know what you might do if you were confronted in a similar manner?” “Yes definitely, mum, I would,” came the reply (personal communication, July 29, 2017). As the mother recounted this story to the audience, she became clearly emotional, recognising a shift in the mother-daughter/adult-

child dynamic: she described it as an “epiphany” and an empowering moment in their developing relationship. A moment she was very grateful to have had and she wanted the audience and cast to know of the positive, meaningful affect that they had on them both. Arguably, they had experienced what O’Toole sees as the latent power of drama, as “one of the best and safest ways of investigating society and speculating on possible new societies” (2006, p. 4).

Another audience member was a Year 11 Chinese exchange student. He wished to speak of the relevance of the scene called Home, in which a Chinese international student and a Korean international student in Aotearoa New Zealand call home with news of the day. In the scene, the students are told, by their respective parent, of issues at home (Korea; China) that mean they will have to think about returning, cutting short their stay.



Figure 51. *YouthQuake*, 2018: a Chinese and a Korean international student contemplates the obligation to return Home

What ensues is a battle between the rights of the young adult – who is developing autonomy, agency, and a sense of a devolved identity – and the familial-parental structure. Unusually, Home was an eight-minute scene, performed entirely in Korean and Mandarin, with no subtitles. The majority English-speaking audience could only follow the scene by watching for physical and emotional cues on the part of the actors, and through semiotic suggestions delivered in the staging. The dialogue, the staging and the aesthetic were designed to reflect what van den Berg stated on the importance of suggesting the multicultural within the process

and product, as “teaching theatre within a multicultural setting is far from non-committal and points of view are always involved. My point of view is predicated on a cultural formulation where different voices are entertained without being deafened by the Western one” (van den Berg as cited in O’Toole & Donelan, 1996, p. 224-225).

7.9.5 DDI

One of the more unusual choices for the play that became *YouthQuake* was the decision to perform a scene, at the start of the second half of the play, that had been written the night before and rehearsed the day of the performance (Appendix J). In 2018, and partly due to the Trump presidency, the rapidity of change in the news media had been remarkable; the news one might expect to read across a month was now happening in a week. I proposed to my co-writer-director that we write a new scene for each performance that reflected the speed of change and kept us, and thus the whole play, current. The process that we engaged with was redolent of a television comedy-drama I had enjoyed in my youth called *Drop the Dead Donkey*¹¹². In turn we called the process and product, and troupe of actors tasked with bringing these scenes to life, Dead Donkey Improv, or DDI. The scenes were developed from pressing news stories in the media, and the performance began with an image from the press (for example CNN or the New Zealand Herald) in which a clear date stamp could be seen, underlining the scenes topicality.

In the original Drop the Dead Donkey television series, the writing was undertaken in such a way as to allow the central narrative of relationships and tensions play out in a predictable yet witty televisual manner. Around 80% of the writing was completed and filmed in the week prior to broadcast, however, 20% was written in the last few hours before broadcast, then rehearsed and recorded ahead of broadcast. Our DDI cast were charged with a similar process: newsworthy articles with dramatic potential were sought by all the production staff, and then once a suitable article/issue had been discovered it was adapted into a pithy four-minute scene by my writing partner and myself. This writing was often undertaken late at night; we completed at least one DDI scene after 1am on the day of performance. The DDI cast of seven, and production crew, had the scene shared with them as a GoogleDoc and were able to watch as the writing happened in real time. Once written they could then start to learn lines ahead of the rehearsal of the scene, which occurred directly after school (around 4pm) on the day of performance (approximately 8.45pm each night).

¹¹² <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2015/apr/13/how-we-made-drop-the-dead-donkey-andy-hamilton-robert-duncan>

The freshness and immediacy – think Brook’s “immediate theatre” as an inspiration point (Brook, 1968) – of the issues presented in the DDI scenes gave the play a vibrant start to the second act. The projection of the news headline that preceded the scene, with its clear date stamp, piqued the audience, as did billboards posted in the foyer detailing what the audience could expect from DDI on that particular night. One audience member was heard to remark how excited he was to see a new DDI scene having enjoyed the previous night’s topical efforts.

Our hope and trust that the news of the day would be relevant and topical, and lead to engaging DDI scenes, proved true. We were able to write several scenes, all of which reflected the ambition and tenor of the rest of the play. These included: unsympathetic messaging of US First Lady Melania Trump’s jacket (‘I really don’t care, do u?’); Winston Peters’s criticism of Australia, because of their flag’s similarity to New Zealand’s; the promotion of gay conversion therapy by right-wing politicians; the Pop-up Globe 2018/19 season announcement and their clumsy sexism and misogyny, and; the protests around permission for two alt-right Canadian media personalities, seemingly promoting hate speech at council venues in Auckland.

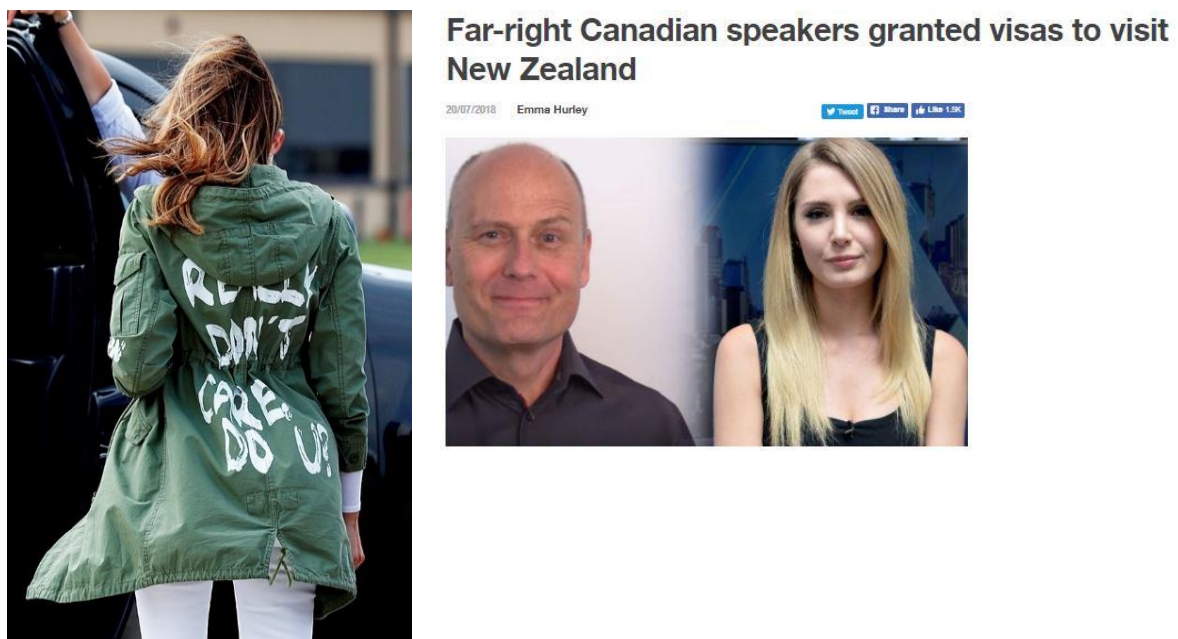


Figure 52. Melania Trump, left, wearing a jacket emblazoned with, ‘I really don’t care do U?’ and Stefan Molyneux and Lauren Southern, right, who were at first welcome, then disinvited, from speaking in New Zealand in 2018.

The scenes received positive feedback for their topicality and speed of creation. On reflection, these DDI scenes were redolent of Brecht’s *Lehrstücke* or his *Living Newspapers*,

in which “teaching”, “learning” or “discovery” (Willett, 1964) were all privileged over passive reception, and where the normal actor-audience relationship was forsaken for one of primal engagement around a mostly shared concern. Audience cognisance of and complicity in a shared knowledge that these DDI scenes were created in the last 24 hours did create an excitement and a keener sense of connection between stage and audience¹¹³. Further to this, utilising a traverse staging, a decision taken at the very outset of the production, proved a valuable tool. The audiences’ ability to observe and enjoy each other’s reactions, made clear to the audience that this play was not complete until their participation was engaged and mutually observed. Their visible meaning-making, with both fellow audience and cast members, was key to a successful process. DDI was also playing another role: acting as an overture for the whole cast-audience debate, which would occur at the end of the play. DDI was hinting at the possibility that the audience might become complicit in the activity of the stage, that they might become “spect-actors,” (Boal, 1974) whose opinions, perspectives and intervention would be welcomed.

7.10 Questions and problems arising from the process

Reflecting on the critique of both students and staff to previous successful productions at my school, I kept an ear open to my student actor participants and staff collaborators and audience. I was keen to front-foot any issues as soon as they arose, where possible, and note those issues that could only be addressed post-production.

A key question and problem that arose during the production was a philosophical one: essentially, ‘where is the line’ for school-based dramatic critiques? Scenes in the play highlighted where the students felt their school was letting them down, especially around LGBTQi+ and where students were being streamed in classes (and thus labelled). As you might find on any staff body, reception from those staff attending was mixed: some were comfortable with the critique of the school and its policies, some ambivalent and a few excited that conversations such as these could take place. Compounding tensions was my awareness that students are transitory, migrating through their school experience, however, schools remain across time. Because of this thinking, a question arose to me: as an educator to whom am I obligated most – the students who are brave enough to share their personal narratives, or the school (my employer) who might be stung by criticism from those self-

¹¹³ This assertion is based upon numerous conversations with audience, and overheard conversations in the interval prior to DDI.

same student narratives? A school pays my salary but working with and for students is my core business.

Discussion with staff, including senior leaders did ease my concerns, somewhat. One member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and a faculty leader were happy that the scene about streaming had been included, as this was a hot button issue being debated by SLT at that time. They concurred that the scene and its contents had skirted close to the line, but that the positioning of student voice was a valid and useful tool to help in deliberations. Such questions and problems speak to the concern of the constraints of working as an artist in a school, where the teacher hopes to challenge their students but not to the point of putting them at risk.



Figure 53. *YouthQuake*, 2018: students fight their cataloguing overlords (in the white lab coats) and reject ‘streaming’ and being ‘labelled’

A further question and problem to consider was the lack of a road map for productions and processes such as this. The notion of the ‘scaffold’ is a much-used noun and adjective in contemporary education practice and seen as a way of creating a supportive working process for students. This can be on both a microcosmic level (e.g. formatted/structured student work- and help-sheets) and macrocosmic level (e.g. differentiated approaches to teaching and learning). But for *YouthQuake* we had no normative scaffold. What is this process we created and executed successfully; what might its name be?

The process was very much teacher-led during *The Pohutukawa Tree* (heavily led; developing Year 11 minds; modest writing) compared to the teacher/student collaboration that was *YouthQuake*, which was dedicated to student agency, autonomy and voice (collaboratively led; developing all years; maximised writing with students). Compare this to undiscussed, teacher-led aesthetic journeys such as *Sweeney Todd* in 2017, where the musical's prescriptive nature leads the director and cast to fulfil quite predictable roles, whilst engaged with the normative aesthetic practices of a large-scale school musical.

7.10.1 Tension in the writing

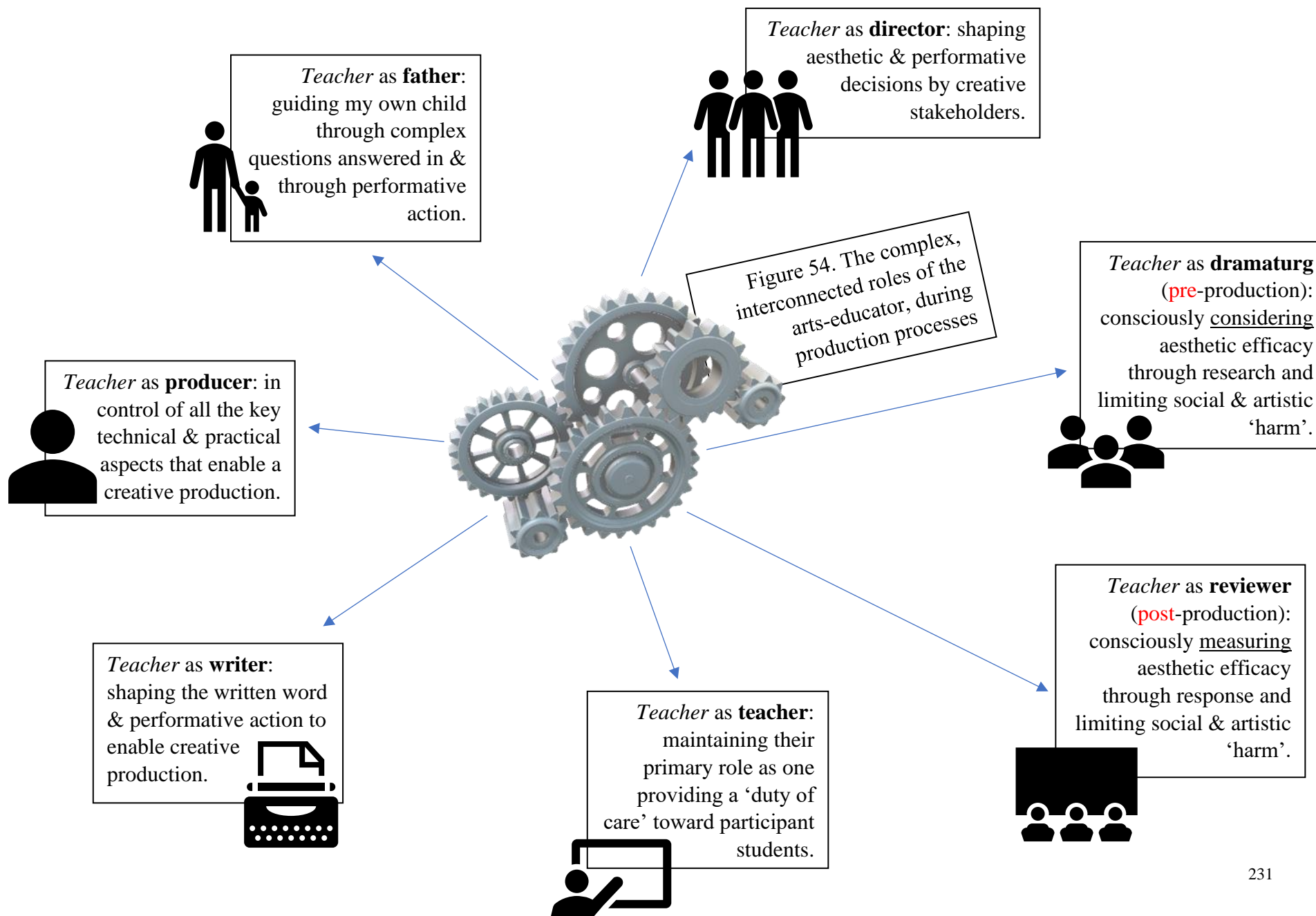
On further reflection, one of the areas of concern that arose during the process was the difference in writing backgrounds of the two writers and a search for the right blend. My partner writes with real literary skill: her structured approach, her use of metaphor, allusion, and literary tropes reflect her training as an English teacher. My style was much looser, with a clear recognition that my approach to text would be mediated by my direction and aesthetic shaping in the workshop and rehearsal period. Essentially, I wrote in a way that reflected the knowledge that some text cannot be too purple as it would be too much when allied with preferred stylistic approaches such as physical theatre or meta-theatrical and Brechtian conventions. Quite often, knowledge of potential performative acts ruled the hand that typed the dialogue.

Fortunately, because the nature of the performance text was a montage of disparate yet connected scenes, the difference between the two writing styles was mediated by this stylistic choice. Any potential differential was not overtly recognised by the audience, just by the writers. Furthermore, attempting to blend the texts further, the completed writing was worked on during workshop and rehearsal, and some effort was made to reference the words of one writer in the text of the other, so as to prefigure, overlap and generate interplay between the two writing styles. My final reflection was that if this process was to be undertaken again, I should like to explore the quality of work that could be generated if both writers were to work together on all scenes, where possible.

7.10.2 Teacher role, teacher frames and teacher accountability

My pragmatic-creative roles in this process have been numerous, from producer to teacher to director to writer to father to dramaturg to audience member to reviewer. In each of these roles I have been consciously aware of my activity and behaviour and how this can impact the young people with whom I worked. Each role, each area of responsibility is also a frame,

within which I am both viewed, by my students and collaborators, and one from which I look out at the task I have been occupied with. In this case the frame can also morph to become a lens with which I use to view the task I was engaged in, and where these tasks overlap (Figure 54).



One of the numerous emails of review and feedback we received was from a Ministry of Education staffer, who wrote: “(I have) Just came back from the show with family and some other MoE colleagues of mine. Incredibly powerful piece of work – phenomenal messages that so many schools and young people across Auckland – Nationally would really benefit from hearing” (J. Tod, personal communication, August 1, 2017). The idea of touring *YouthQuake*, as suggested in this email, is attractive but fraught with challenges. The issues and trials faced by these specific students, and which in turn became the performance text, are very much located within this school(s) and student body. Yes, the students’ experiences would be familiar to other young people around the country, but the material was crafted strategically for ‘our’ specific audience. If the play was poorly received by other audiences what might this do to the students’ sense of confidence in the arguments that they had generated? The play might also be misunderstood, as again – due to its specific locatedness – themes, arguments, and concerns might not resonate with audiences beyond the school(s). Also, there is the possibility that other students in lower decile schools, who are also disadvantaged (but in differing ways), might make light of wealthy, privileged North Shore students ‘preaching’ about issues that some students would find preferable to the issues that they face. What might these reactions do to the students’ resultant sense of success and self, developed during the original production? It could be argued that it might undermine the unique success that was achieved in the original production of *YouthQuake*.

7.11 Unintended success and curriculum departures

In ...*Dream*, I had happily, unwittingly alighted upon a potential new way of rehearsing a play in a school context, resulting in a new rehearsal paradigm (Figure 12, p. 110). *YouthQuake* also afforded myself and my technical production manager (and fellow drama staff member) a new opportunity. Our aesthetic *look* for our school productions leaned heavily on dynamic lighting and static and moving video projection. Often redolent of the aesthetic found in pop videos and youth-orientated marketing campaigns, the number of male students wishing to work on production grew exponentially, as they observed the production aesthetic. What was once a small, dedicated, boutique group of students, was now a large army of 25 lighting and digital projection aesthetes.

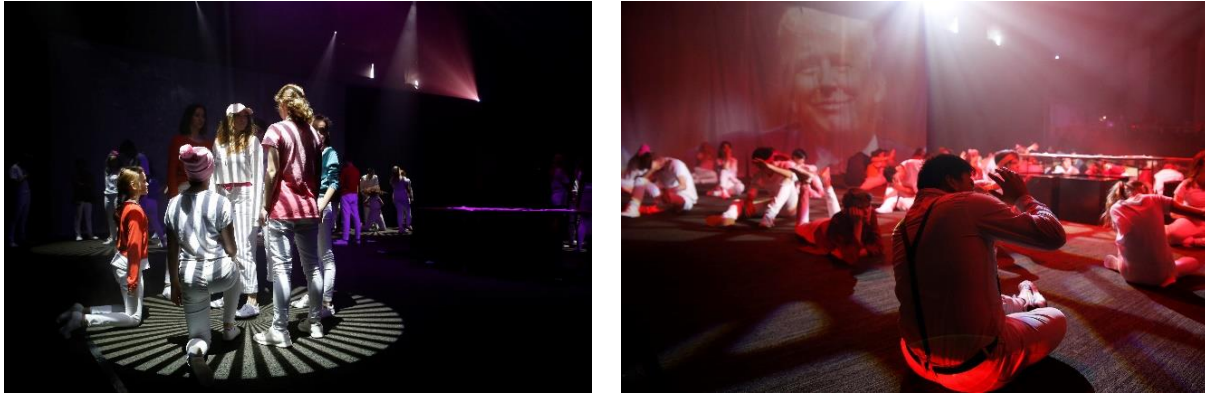


Figure 55. *YouthQuake*, 2018: dynamic use of lighting and digital projection in the aesthetic

Within *The New Zealand Curriculum* (2007), and *Arts In the New Zealand Curriculum* (2000) exists what are known as the Performing Arts Technology Standards. These are a series of Unit Standards¹¹⁴ (as opposed to Achievement Standards that I utilised in *The Pohutukawa Tree* project), which can be taught at all senior levels and are achievable at Achieved, Merit and Excellence¹¹⁵. These standards allow the student to gain credits for lighting design, sound design, prop and costume design and creation, and stage management; these were all roles that our young men were already fulfilling on production. My colleague and I agreed that the time was right to leverage our students' visible production success into a discreet, timetabled, curriculum course that would parallel their work on production, and gain them credits for their hard work. We developed a proposal for a new course, in booklet form, and then presented this to the curriculum committee who were welcoming of the idea and sanctioned a new course, to start in Term 1, 2019. This course is to be led by a drama teaching colleague, who is also the technical production manager. Currently, this will only involve our young men from the Boys' School, but we hope in turn to include the young women from our sister Girls' School.

The students' prior, foundational success, as well as the possibilities of this new technical course, reflect the ambition of my research question: the group of students are a unique group, with their own cultural identity within the larger cultural identity of the production cast and crew. Their work on production not only allows for clear aesthetic exploration and play, but also – ahead of the new curriculum course – allowed students to work in and with elements of the current New Zealand Curriculum (MoE, 2007). Through the work on production, technical students were drawing on expectations (and building competence) in the Vision, Values, Key Competencies and Principals

¹¹⁴ Unit Standards can be taught in private training enterprises and 6th Form (Year 12/13) colleges, contrasting with Achievement Standards, which can only be taught in schools.

¹¹⁵ Other Unit Standards are normatively only Achieved or Not Achieved; there is no gradation.

sections of *The New Zealand Curriculum* (NZC). From the Vision section, students showed themselves to be:

- Confident: Positive in their own identity
- Connected: Connected to the land and environment
- Lifelong learners: Critical and creative thinkers (NZC, 2007, P. 8).

From the Principles section, students showed that they respected and embraced:

- Cultural diversity: values the histories and traditions of all its people
- Community engagement: engages the support of whānau (NZC, 2007, P. 9).

From the Values section, students recognised and demonstrated:

- Innovation, inquiry, and curiosity
- Diversity
- Equity (NZC, 2007, P. 10).

From the Key Competencies section, students showed their evolving ability by:

- Using language, symbols, and texts
- Relating to others
- Participating and contributing (NZC, 2007, P. 12-13).

The students' comprehensive work on *YouthQuake*, both by this team of technical aesthetes, as well as by the larger company of actors involved in the delivery of the text, had delivered a response to the research question:

How can a drama teacher develop new dramatic-performative work that engages teacher, student and community with the aesthetic, develops social curiosity, at the same time that it meets curriculum goals?

Through reflection and examination of the processes, output and responses to the work by all percipients involved in *YouthQuake*, I felt confident that the following had been accomplished:

- that a dramatic-performative work had been created and performed which engaged teacher, student and the community with the aesthetic;
- that a process and product had been built that developed social curiosity in its percipients;
- that curriculum goals had been explored and achieved.

Chapter 8. The Theatre Bar, After – Conclusion and Implications

“A brief scene, in which a man confronts himself”

A corridor. Later. Two theatre-makers sit across from one another. In manner and bearing they are seemingly different, but they are in fact the same person, 25 years apart in age. They have many of the same features: the hair, the smile, a cocky yet approachable demeanour; an excited playful look in the eyes. On the left sits the younger version of the man: freshly graduated from drama school, and before that, from university; on the right sits an older version of the man: calmer, more knowledgeable, but keenly aware of his frailties and shortcomings. A look between them breaks the tension and a conversation starts.

“Hello”, says the younger man.

“Kia ora, friend”, says the older.

“Why you here?” asks the younger.

“Graduating”, replies the older.

“Graduating? I have done plenty – and frankly enough – of that recently”, replies the younger, spikily.

“Achieving something in education is not just an end in itself, nor a finishing line to be crossed, you know”, affirms the older.

“Mmmm...” muses the younger, dismissively.

“Have you heard of Plutarch’s dictum?” asks the older, calmly.

“No; should I have?” came the reply.

“Yes: ‘The mind is not a vessel to be filled. But a fire to be lighted.’ That’s not a bad aphorism to guide the way.”

“Mmmm...” responded the younger, frustrated by his inability to think of a retort.

The two men look at each other: the older looks kindlier towards the thrusting, ambitious younger version of himself. The younger is fidgeting, keen to get started, to get out into the world and create work. The older is happy to pause, to reflect and consider, to think openly about what might come next.

8.1 A research question revisited

At the beginning of this thesis, a research question founding the work and guiding the work was outlined, as I looked for new ways of engaging my students and myself in both the curriculum and the aesthetic:

How can a drama teacher develop new dramatic-performative work that engages teacher, student and community with the aesthetic, develops social curiosity, at the same time that it meets curriculum goals?

At the start of this journey, my practice was in a state of stasis and needing re-evaluation that it was hoped would lead to new/renewed practice that would overcome my inertia.

In the subsequent chapters that followed, a response to this question was explored and articulated, beginning with an Introduction in The Theatre Foyer (Chapter 1). Here, the rationale and the antecedents to the research were outlined, including a tension between a mid-career teacher trying to re-imagine his practice at a time when drama and theatre arts has been recognised as having positively moved “from the margins to the centre” (O’Connor, 2008, p. 5). Chapter 2 began with a vignette, in which a naïve younger teacher experiences te ao Māori for the first time and the possibilities for a bicultural education, thus setting up the themes of the chapter to follow. This Context chapter detailed The Neighbourhood in which I teach, and the shifting position and roles I inhabit and the need for flexibility. In this chapter, key documents that supported and acted as a foundation for my research and practice were outlined: *The New Zealand Curriculum* (MoE, 2007); *The Arts Curriculum* (MoE, 2000); NCEA and Achievement Standards, and how curriculum would be situated in the work. Further to this, the demography of the school context, and its student body, was outlined, and how I as a Pākehā New Zealander positioned myself to engage with all the voices of the community. Finally, the nature of the three projects – #1, #2 and #3 – was outlined, and how they functioned for student-participants, and appeared to an audience. In Chapter 3, a Literature Review – in a fictional Green Room where I can chat casually with those who provoke and inspire me – was detailed. Writers, researchers and thought leaders from the realms of drama and theatre education and multicultural and postmodern education speak (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Eisner, 2008; Ho & Wang, 2016). Student voice, which reflected notions of multiculturalism and pluralism, was considered, as well as the function and feel of an aesthetic at play in the classroom and beyond. *The New Zealand Curriculum* documents from Aotearoa New Zealand were unpacked for relevance and application, as well as other recent research studies into drama education in Aotearoa (Brooks, 2010; Cody, 2013; Luton, 2015). The founding principles of ethnography and their relevance and application were considered, and how these stimulate performance ethnography (and ethno-

drama/theatre) and verbatim drama and theatre (Denzin, 2003; Gallagher & Sallis, 2019; Gertz, 1973; Brandt et al, 2014; Schön, 1983). A bicultural and Kaupapa Māori approach to education and arts education was detailed, and its relationship to the nation's founding document, Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Bishop, 2005; Salmond, 1990; Smith, 2012) was explored. Drama and theatre theorists that underpinned some of the approaches undertaken in the classroom and workshop/rehearsal room were also examined, specifically Brecht (Willett, 1964), Stanislavski (Benedetti, 1998 & 2000; Magarshack, 1950; Mitter, 1992) and postmodern approaches to drama and theatre (Bogart, 2001; Kershaw, 1992; Schechner, 1985).

In Chapter 4, a Methodology was outlined. From the vantage point of an imagined Technical Box in a theatre, the specific processes undertaken in the research were articulated, specifically arts-based research and reflective practice (Greenwood, 2019; Russell, 2005; Schön, 1983). The nature of my unique locus of practice and research and any ethical considerations were also outlined, as were the participants and audiences, and finally the manner of the presentation of the thesis was detailed.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 focused on each of the three school-based dramatic processes and their resultant products. The intentions of the author and the desired outcomes for students experiencing the process/product were articulated, and in Chapters 6 and 7 the impact of the dramatic work on their audience was discussed. The aesthetic was examined in relation to each process/product in these chapters, especially how I applied at first a bicultural performative lens, then a bicultural and multicultural lens, and finally a multicultural, pluralist and postmodern lens to the dramatic work. Throughout the various processes, students were given the opportunity to experience agency, autonomy that allowed for their unique voice to be positioned in the dramatic work. In the final process and product, Chapter 7, discussion of how the voice of the audience was encouraged and heard. Students, staff collaborators and audiences were all invited to comment upon the efficacy of the work, and these interviews and communications were recorded and/or written up and can be found both in the body of the chapters and in the appendices.

8.2 Revisiting purpose and approach

The purpose of this research was essentially two-fold: 1. to aid the teacher to consider new ways to approach his teaching and his engagement with the aesthetic, and 2. through that approach to excite students and community, whilst serving the curriculum.

8.2.1. Changed pedagogical practice; renewed engagement

From the data generated, I would contest that the processes/products outlined in this thesis have led to success: students, community and leadership of the school have all commented upon an

improvement in student outcomes from the projects, as well as community engagement, and a recognition in the latent power of the aesthetic to empower and provoke questions amongst members of our school community. Personally, I have experienced a renewed excitement and realisation that the new tools that I have researched and utilised have changed my practice for the better. Furthermore, my changed practice has impacted some of the fundamental elements of my rehearsal methodology and the positioning of dominant discourses (primarily Western) on how to formulate and lead a rehearsal (Bogart, 2001; Schechner, 1985; Smith, 2012). These changes in practice, focusing on a non-Western, bicultural approach, can be seen in a new rehearsal methodology proposal (see 5.13, p. 101).

8.2.2. A portal to a new way of working

During the three projects (Chapters 5-7), my confidence grew exponentially, as I played with new – and for me – atypical and non-normative drama and theatre processes, and as I came to re-evaluate the possibilities and power of the aesthetic, and how it can be manipulated to the benefit of artist and audience. My tropes, my normative and default expressions of artistic and teaching practice began, and continued over time, to be augmented and/or replaced by new ways of seeing and doing. This in turn positively impacted the work I made with, about and for my students and community. The research into, and then practice of, performance ethnography and specifically verbatim theatre greatly impacted the performative elements of my work. Starting modestly in Project #1 *The Pohutukawa Tree* and then continued in a bicultural manner in Project #2 *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, verbatim drama and theatre (Brandt et al, 2014; Hammond & Steward, 2008) were most effectively used in Project #3, *YouthQuake*. In this final project, the promotion and successful execution of policies and practice, around student autonomy and agency, led to cast members confident to share their personal narratives and ideas for a world renewed, too often private and unseen, which in turn led to inclusion in a changed dramatic performance work. These cast members were encouraged to “participate in the world’s renewal not as we imagine it, but as they will come to create it” (Fels, 2012, p. 51).

However, in the final project, *YouthQuake*, there was much student frustration and criticism due to the lack of a substantive, tangible roadmap, which might have enabled students to see the ways forward, understand the process(es), and visualise a potential final dramatic product. When productions such as *Sweeney Todd* (2017) and *Les Misérables* (2019) were mounted here at school, the concrete nature of the libretto and score, as well as numerous examples of other productions found on the internet, allowed the students to imagine their own journey with/in that text, and how they might be situated in a performance. The same is not true of large-scale drama and theatre that

is devised, founded upon student testimonies, that is also driven by a process and not an end product. In the future, when we (as a school) no doubt attempt to create a major theatre piece similar in nature and process to *YouthQuake* then greater education around expectation and process will need to be outlined to the student actors.

8.2.3. The balance of artist/teacher/parent

In the Context chapter (Chapter 2) I detailed a propensity as a younger director to be far more concept-driven and prescriptive when working with the aesthetic demands of a drama and/or theatre piece. This often resulted in a binary distinction, between performance work that I executed that was either conceptually compelling or conceptually dead(ly) (Brook, 1968); work that had no heart, no essential lifeforce.

What has been learned through this three-project process and thesis, as well as through the final dramatic products, is that there is a need on the part of the teacher-director to feed and sustain the imaginations of all creative participants, including him- or herself. To stimulate them with profound ideas and knowledge, to inculcate a sense of the importance of their voice, and to create numerous opportunities during the process, and even during the product, where they can express autonomy and agency for the betterment of the final dramatic product. Where possible, to truly build theatre that is a reflection and reinforcement of the community that the drama is located within and emerges from (Kershaw, 1992), it is also essential that the audience is given agency, to share their testimonies, and to add value to the dramatic narrative (Boal, 1974). To my mind, all effective theatre looks for an unmediated synergy and communion between the two key aesthetic players: actor and audience. It is through their relationship that the meaning-making process is begun or enabled. Because of the improved listening, sharing, collaborating, and actioning of all agentic responses and suggestions I am a. a better teacher and director, and b. able to create better dramatic products.

The final element in my newly found appreciation of my augmented role as teacher and director, is through my relationship to my daughter. “Teach the class as though your child is in it”, a respected colleague once told me (personal communication, July, 2008). When I first heard this statement, my daughter was but two-years old. As she grows older, I review what this statement now means in relation to how my daughter engages with her ever-changing world, as she experiences new and challenging facets of being a young person in 21st Century Aotearoa New Zealand. Through her eyes, her thoughts, feelings and epiphanies, I also see how my students might think and feel, and this changes my approach towards them, subtly and substantively, microcosmically and macrocosmically.

8.3 Findings of this Study

Through my research, I recognise and celebrate that there are numerous examples of drama teachers' reflective practice globally, and that such practice is neither wholly unique nor totally new. However, because the research detailed in this thesis occurs in a school (and for a teacher) in Aotearoa New Zealand is a point of difference, as far less research can be found that details such practice. This thesis outlines what and how each of the three potential processes and products might look like in a specific school and community setting, and by extension, what these processes and products might suggest to other institutions and/or teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand. This includes implications for a teacher's relationship to curricula, NCEA and aesthetic.

The major discovery of this thesis relates to curricula and the application of NCEA, in that the "tyranny" (Fels, 2012) of well-known scripts or the well-made play is not the only way a community and audience can be engaged by a cast of student actors in a school context. An expressed prejudice for, about and towards drama and theatre that has name recognition, and/or a limited audience appreciation of the aesthetic, can be overcome through a meaningful engagement of relevant dramatic processes. Many of these processes hint at and can stem from the front end of the NZC (MoE, 2007). As workshops and rehearsal processes solidify into concrete aesthetic and performative action, they can be used to communicate new ideas and fresh perspectives to a potentially unknowing and/or unwitting, but engaged, audience. In turn, those audiences can be questioned and interviewed in order to gain their perspective on what, how and why a future aesthetic product might be generated and executed. This symbiosis of an "immediate" theatrical (Brook, 1968, p. 110), true and fundamental relationship between artists/artistry and its audience creates a virtuous cycle of work that questions, provokes, stimulates and, in the final analysis, benefits all parties engaged in both process and product, "where a living confrontation can take place" (Brook, 1968, p. 112). A shared social curiosity, between student actors and audience, can be positioned at the heart of such a confrontation.

The challenge that is inherent in a relationship between artists/artistry and its audience is how to promote new works that do not have the name recognition of well-known and/or well-regarded performance texts. Due to the high-quality work that is being produced at my school in curriculum classes and especially in the extra-curricular productions¹¹⁶ the students and staff involved in production do have a *following* of sorts. These colleagues, friends and whānau will keenly attend new, atypical and non-normative work (for a school production). However, promoting such work

¹¹⁶ In the last five years, the school, staff, and students have won 18 AMI-, iTicket- and Auckland Live-Showdown Awards, plus six Shakespeare Globe Centre NZ Awards.

further afield, and proselytising for the cause, and encouraging other schools to take a risk on new approaches to curricula and NCEA is the work for another year. Increasing the challenge of presenting atypical performances in schools, has been the canonisation of dramatic texts in Aotearoa New Zealand, through the establishment of the Prescribed Playwright's List, perpetuated by NZQA¹¹⁷. This list is dispiritingly typical, normative and predictable: dramatic texts of (mostly) dead, white European males dominates this list, and the notion that drama and theatre is founded solely upon words discovered in the well-made play is perpetuated here. Young and new drama teachers, with ever decreasing time in lectures and in drama practice, are being told that such a list is a good place to start their drama, theatre, creative and aesthetic journey. This needs to be addressed.

8.3.1. Common threads across the three projects

The threads of this research are underscored by a recent experience. In August of this year, a former student died whilst riding an electric scooter in downtown Auckland. The student's death was utterly facile, meaningless; the student just encountered a bump, received a blow to the head and died. Attending the student's funeral was a challenging experience, considering that the accident occurred when he was only 23. However, what struck me about the funeral is noteworthy: as each friend and family member tried to find meaning and make sense of the loss of a precious life, each turned not to rational thought and perhaps prose but to allegory, metaphor and poetry. One by one, each speaker either played music with relevant lyrics, or spoke poetry that said something about the deceased's character; video montages with film and still image played, whilst music underscored the images. In a remarkable ritual of love and affirmation, the audience were asked to hold aloft and show the family of the deceased a spread of images on the middle pages of a handout given to friends and whānau on arrival.

In November of this year, whilst receiving an award, I recounted the experience, its value and importance, and its implications for an audience primarily made up of students, teachers and fellow aesthetes. In essence, I concluded that this funeral experience reminded us all that making art works – and by extension creating theatre – satisfies a fundamental need: to make sense of our world and its complexity during its most challenging moments, during which we turn not to rational thought but to art works to help express our confusion and tension. I reflected on a 'what if', wherein if any one of us was confronted by a sceptic, who sees not the value of what we do, maybe ask that sceptic

¹¹⁷ <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/ncea/subjects/assessment-specifications/drama-13/>

to consider, to reflect upon a comparable experience in their lives, where the artistic outweighed the rational, before casting doubt or aspersions.

On reflection, I recognise that the work undertaken in all three projects have been similar acts of love and affirmation, during which students have been given the chance to reflect artistically-creatively upon their complex worlds, that sometimes overlap, sometimes clash. That through the opportunity to experience and action autonomy, and to be agentic, students are shown a portal through which meaning-making can take place through acts of construction, of art-making, that reflects the world as they experience it as well as how they imagine it could be.

In the students acts of agentic construction, there have been key themes or threads to the creative and performance work:

- Biculturalism, multiculturalism and pluralism – students have been invited to recognise the whenua of Aotearoa New Zealand as a start point for an open-ended, dramatic discussion around position and identity, through curriculum and aesthetic. Discussions were founded upon a bicultural identity and then segued into the realm of multiculturalism and pluralism (Bishop, 2005; Greenwood, 2002 & 2006; Schechner, 1985; Smith, 2012).
- Autonomy and agency – the power of learning through the arts is the ability to place the student at the heart of educational experience, and creating a shared foundation of power (Greenwood & Wilson, 2006; Fels, 2012; Freire, 1970), which enables, empowers and enriches dramatic work that eventuates.
- The balance of process and product – the opportunity for students to engage in rich, meaningful processes is crucial, but so is the need for students to be able to create an artefact, a physical piece of theatre, which can be shared with an audience. The product has a semiotic value, in that it stands as a pou¹¹⁸, or totem, for the unseen work that takes place in the workshop and in rehearsal (Aston & Savona, 2003; Elam, 2002). The final dramatic product also has import, as the visible manifestation for a world not as it currently is, but how students imagine it as being (Fels, 2012).
- The importance of space – the use and creation of space, as part of the curriculum-aesthetic journey is also a theme of the work. Whether this is either time well spent in a classroom for workshop/rehearsal (as seen in work on *The Pohutukawa Tree*), or in the creation of specific proxemics for a staged production (*A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *YouthQuake*). Each space was been carefully considered and constructed, to best represent the students and their

¹¹⁸ (Noun) post, support pole, pillar; supporter, mentor.

aesthetic journey, and/or to allow for a specific quality of audience interaction with the drama/theatre piece. A successful creation and use of space enabled students to make physically manifest the nature of their creative work, whilst also affording an audience an opportunity to engage with the dramatic work in a way that maximises its impact for them; they are discouraged from passive viewership. Part of this impact is seen in the way that the audience enters into a contract with the performers/performance (Kershaw, 1992), negotiating the nature of the communion between the two. This was most dynamically seen in *YouthQuake* in the final Greek Salon scene (Figure 49, p. 217). Implicit in how such a performance space is created and utilised is how an intellectual space is generated also, in order that the audience can experience discussion, debate, change and growth.

- Teacher-student relationships – across the three projects the relationships between teacher and student became ever-more meaningful and impactful. Project #1 *The Pohutukawa Tree* was the most teacher mandated and directed drama work of the three; Project #3 *YouthQuake* was a process and product that afforded students the greatest opportunity for autonomy and agency to shape the dramatic work. As the students were invited to be evermore greatly involved in the construction and execution across the three projects, so trust, respect, openness, collaboration and a shared belief in what was being executed improved. That is not say that prior to starting, or in Project #1, that there was mistrust, disrespect, etc.; positive engagement was already in evidence. Rather, the imbuing of the students with near-equal status in the process resulted in greatly altered relationships, and product.

8.3.2. A writer of performed research

During my research processes, and during the writing of this PhD thesis, I have found great satisfaction in the opportunity to execute the role of a writer of performed research. This has been shown in both the theatrical arena, where my dramatic writing – based upon student testimony – has been executed in front of a public audience, and in the written scenes in this thesis, which prefigure each chapter.

All three projects – #1, #2 & #3 – allowed me, as writer, to create text that responded to and reflected the complex worlds and needs of my students. In Project #1, *The Pohutukawa Tree*, this writing was a comfortable and tangible process: I had the scaffold of an original play to spring from, as well as the cultural-theatrical ideas of the students to use as my foundation. Working with well-known, beloved characters from New Zealand's dramatic-theatrical stage history was a rewarding experience. These characters had existed long enough that creative departures with their

narratives were acceptable, yet still fresh enough in the minds of teachers, students and audiences who were able to recognise and enjoy such creative departures. In Project #2, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, I did not write text, but instead utilised Shakespeare's words; however, with my Māori Cultural Advisor (Matua T), we devised, created and executed performative action, founded upon Tikanga Māori. Although not a dramatic playtext in the strictest sense of the word, the articulation of the ideas that were generated, and then written up in this thesis, is reflective of the Modelbuch utilised in the restaged works of artists such as Brecht and Stanislavski (Mitter, 1992; Schechner, 1985; Willett, 1964). The research that in turn led to performance was given tangible form, via an articulation of process, through the words that I wrote up in this thesis. I recognise that such process and resultant artefact gives credence and value to the position that performative ideas do not necessarily need a textual basis from which to begin. The final act of written and performed research was Project #3, *YouthQuake*. Having high regard for texts such as *The Laramie Project* (Kaufman, 2001) and *Verbatim* (Brandt et al, 2014) – to name but two – I had been nervous of undertaking the writing of a full length, original play, founded upon student testimony. However, what I discovered through the process of research, interviews and writing of *YouthQuake* was joy, reward and authentic collaboration. Joy in connecting with my student-collaborators at a primal, somatic and fundamental level. The students' testimonies were utterly compelling and urgent, and as I wrote with my partner (Mary) I was overtaken by a need and desire to speak their truth in a way that honoured their bravery in sharing each narrative, whilst finding theatrical conceits that engaged an audience successfully. Such an experience made the process, and eventual product, hugely rewarding, eclipsing the previous two projects. The nature of the material, its fundamental connection to its author-participants, its predicate that those involved had to be newly vulnerable, and needed to listen respectively to their peers and their testimonies, created a rehearsal room context like few other: the rehearsal room was one of profoundly authentic collaboration, where egos were kept in check by a shared recognition that the narratives being developed were our shared, primary focus. It was a time and space (and writing approach) that acutely reflected Brook's notion of a "Holy Theatre" in which "ordinary men and their clumsy instruments are transformed by an act of possession" (Brook, p. 47, 1968). Finally, I would like to speak to the writing of the brief scenes that prefigure most of the chapters in this thesis. Originally, I undertook these to allow a sense of the creative act to be seen and felt by the reader, which could not be fully experienced without the full creative participation of the reader in the projects I outline in the thesis. On reflection, I recognise that these scenes have a far greater impact and import than I originally intended; rather than describing research provocations and aesthetic engagement in a process, they are, in themselves, aesthetically engaging, speaking directly to the senses, enlivening the reader and

pausing the rational, the qualitative factors and data sets that support the research, and that are found in the thesis. Although I found these scenes relatively easy to write initially, I found that I returned to them at regular intervals, re-writing each to better reflect the subtle currents of the research that followed in the respective chapter, or due to a new emphasis in the thesis in its totality.

8.3.3. As a teacher of boys

My current teaching context, where this research was undertaken and thesis written, is my first that is non co-educational. In my last five years working at this school, I have been surprised by the nature of the young men with whom I work: the quality of their engagement, their relationships with each other, and the way that they rehearse and play in role. In my work with these young men, both in curriculum classwork and in production, I have found them to be emotionally open and available. Notably, without the pressure of female students in a class, when they recognise that their behaviour is not being viewed and mediated by young women, their need to show off and play a stereotypical, predictable male role is minimised. I also discovered that the shades of masculinity and male identity are more easily discussed in a single sex context. In terms of performance, dressing as a woman or performing a sense of the feminine, in a sincere and authentic way, is more likely to occur at my current, single-sex context, rather than at the co-educational schools of my past. Such discoveries are reflective of Sallis's research (2010) focused on young men, drama work and a single-sex context. The impact of the positive attributes demonstrated by my male students was seen when they engaged in production rehearsals with female drama students from our sister school. Having developed and demonstrated positive gender habits in class, these same young men maintained their attitudes in rehearsal with their female peers. This was doubly reinforced by the workshop and rehearsal process for *YouthQuake*, in which some of the narratives and testimonies spoke to gender equality, respect amongst the sexes and an acceptance of pluralism. The developing text acted as an external influence on potentially toxic masculinity behaviour that may (or may not) have been considered by my male students.

8.4 The teacher's changed position/ality

Writing this thesis has enabled me to engage in an ongoing reflection on why my thesis and process(es) began. This was due, in part, to my experiencing ennui, stasis and uncertainty in both my teaching and aesthetic life. At the time that this was happening, I reflected on these three as being negative forces for both teacher and director. However, what I have come to realise is that, on the contrary, the three are actually positive, desired and predictable, and are also of value to my students who are engaged with me. The ennui, stasis and uncertainty are part of a predictable cycle of a teacher; to not experience these emotions, or other comparable feelings, would limit the

opportunity for changed practice. As I reflect on the process of the thesis, and the projects that make up the whole, I recognise that there were moments of either ennui, stasis or uncertainty during each of the three projects, comparable to those that existed at the start. For example, I note in my journal a conversation with my primary supervisor at the end of *The Pohutukawa Tree* project, in which I revealed that I was stuck, uncertain as to what should come next; how would I build or develop meaningful work from this point forward. However, it was the sense of uncertainty and concern that provoked the reaching out and consideration of fresh, creative curriculum departures, and of undertaking further research, reading and class experimentation. Further to my experiences, my students also encountered uncertainty, most notably during *YouthQuake*, during which they faced a sense of dread and fear about what should happen next, due to an atypical approach to the process. Again, such uncertainty led to new avenues of shared exploration and research, and to performance work that was as impactful – if not more so – as work that is created through a more typical process.

Further to my changed position as teacher, and my renewed-reimagined processes, this thesis, its processes and products, has also allowed me to experience ongoing reflection on how I am positioned as a New Zealander. I recognise that as I have guided my students, allowing them to experience a sense of Tūrangawaewae – their position and locatedness as New Zealanders – my journey alongside them has allowed me to consider how I too am positioned as a New Zealander. Such reflection is important as it allows me to consider the authority of my work, and from this the potential impact of the work in this thesis for fellow Kiwi educators and students, as it is founded upon shared values, principles and tikanga that are distinctly of this place, Aotearoa New Zealand.

8.5 Duty of care: student safety in the endeavour

As has been detailed, student-respondents reflected positively upon the experience of being in one or more of the three projects and experiencing their processes and products. The positive affirmation came from students of varied racial, political, economic, social backgrounds and sexual orientations. As a teacher my first duty is one of caring for my charges, and the phrase ‘duty of care’ is one I repeat to myself most days, echoing the Hippocratic oath pronounced by doctors. However, two concerns do mediate the generally positive responses: 1. the frustration and ennui experienced by students during the workshop and rehearsal phase of *YouthQuake* (7.7.1), and 2. the awareness that a student might reveal more of themselves than is appropriate, due to the open nature of workshop/rehearsal and their desire to say something meaningful (Duffy et al, 2019). These two concerns combined during the opportunity for the students to work on Autocours, in *YouthQuake* (7.5.1). During this process, both myself and my writer-director partner had to reject work that had been created by students, due to its content and nature, and this might have added to the frustration

and ennui of the students involved, as has been previously discussed. If the processes and product that became *YouthQuake* is to be repeated, replicated in the future, a way to engage with the ennui, and manage student revelation, will have to be instituted for the safety of the students.

8.6 Contribution to Knowledge

This thesis, and the creative work detailed within it, has afforded me an opportunity to profoundly reflect upon my practice, which is something that few teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand have the chance to do. The experience, processes and resultant products stand as an encouragement to other teachers, and as an outline, or suggested example, of a teaching practice that can be applied, developed and/or augmented for a specific school context and community.

Further to this, I have too often read an email exchange (on the New Zealand drama community's listserv Dramanet¹¹⁹), in which a young teacher reaches out for help, advice or resources to enable her or him to teach a specific unit of work. Such emails rarely reveal a teaching practice in which a rich context has been considered as a predicate to found the work, or processes born specifically of students or a unique school context. Therefore, I hope that this thesis stands as a provocation to avoid the unhelpful binary distinctions that have been created between teaching to the Achievement Standards (or to exams) and teaching social curiosity. Both a successful curriculum/NCEA experience (resulting in meaningful credits) can be achieved, whilst at the same time learning about the world, social justice, pluralism, and multiculturalism. This can be achieved through an intelligent application of the front end of *The New Zealand Curriculum* and 21st Century dramatic processes that are fit for purpose.

8.7 Implications for practice and policy

The implications for practice include a need for schools and teacher-practitioners to consider resisting the desire to default to the big budget musical, which has name recognition, but instead to consider alternative theatrical events that grow from, and reflect more fully, the community that they come from. It is time that schools and teachers more fully considered a form of drama and theatre, founded in process, that is either rooted in an original text (and adapted, developed, augmented) but results in a new text, or, alternatively, is rooted in a research process that results in a brand-new text (Schechner, 1985). This is not just for in-class, modestly staged work, but also for schools to consider when mounting their large-scale yearly productions. To aid in this endeavour, I am keen to present at upcoming drama conferences and to volunteer my services to the Auckland theatre community as a judge in various school competitions, for which I have been accepted,

¹¹⁹ <https://artsonline.tki.org.nz/Communities/Drama-Dramanet>

whilst on a sabbatical year in 2020. During this time, I will be sitting on committees extolling the virtues of the processes I have outlined in this thesis, and proposing creating a new award for original or new drama and theatre pieces, or drama that tells the story of specific communities, from here in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Beyond practice is policy, and in this area I am keen to discover like- or open-minded staff in the Drama New Zealand subject association and also at the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, in order to find ways to position and promote work that runs contrary to the typical-normative plays on the Prescribed Playwrights List, which I have previously criticised.

8.8 Suggestions for further research

I am cognisant that this research is limited by its locus and specific student population: one need only look at the reactions to *YouthQuake* of students from my former school – who were oblivious to the themes raised in the play – to understand this fact (Chapter 7). However, there is clear scope for further research.

One area for further research that would help mediate some of the limitations I have discussed, would be to work with the Ministry of Education’s Communities of Learning¹²⁰. These Communities of Learning, or CoL as they are known within schools, allow schools to “come together for a purpose”, building educational links between schools that reflect the knowledge that they “are stronger as a community than they would be as individual kura/schools”. Schools are encouraged to “construct processes of working together by talking, sharing information, experience and expertise” (MoE, 2015, p. 2).

A potential future project within the CoL might be a large-scale piece of performance ethnography, utilising verbatim drama methodologies. This could be built upon the work of five to seven drama and/or arts teacher practitioners from different schools in my region of Auckland. Extensive interviews with students from all the schools would create a meta-data bank that would probably echo some of the data generated for *YouthQuake*, whilst introducing the participants (teachers; students) to new data that they had not considered or imagined. I envision creating an ethno-drama/theatre performance with my school collaborators, founded upon an open-ended workshop process, that is individualised in part to allow the school’s specific and unique student/community voice to be heard, whilst also sharing common performative features across schools (for example, a Brechtian ‘bookending’ scene at the start and end to frame the drama/theatre piece). By doing this, the individual schools and their communities can also see themselves as part of a greater

¹²⁰ <https://www.education.govt.nz/communities-of-learning/>

community, in which isolated experience is alternatively seen as common and shared and can be mediated by aesthetic intervention. Such work will also allow me as a leader in the New Zealand drama community to share with fellow teacher-practitioners alternative methodologies, both for rehearsal processes and performance products. In part, this will also address concerns I have previously detailed over the NCEA Prescribed Playwrights List.

Participants for such a project would initially include drama/theatre, dance, music and arts specialists. However, I have found when producing the schools' production, that there are many teachers of non-arts subjects who have a high level of proficiency in several art forms. For these teachers, I would like to devise a process that would allow them to become involved and add value to the endeavour. This might have to be as part of phase two.

8.9 Final Thoughts

A young student actor stands before me, his teacher and director. He is costumed as a member of a societal class that is impoverished and dispossessed. He is a New Zealander of Chinese descent. He stands beside other members of an ensemble: Pākehā, Māori, Pasifika, Chinese-, Korean- and Indian-New Zealanders, as well as Filipino-New Zealanders. There are around 65 ensemble members in total, and all are singing their heartfelt rage at a political system that has dispossessed them, in one of the choruses from *Les Misérables*. This production was the schools' joint production in 2019 and the young man who appears at the start of this paragraph embodies two characteristics: 1. he is a student who sings in English a French story in a New Zealand school surrounded by peers of all various racial and ethnic backgrounds and sexual orientations, and he is consciously and unapologetically framed as such (Figure 56). His experience and practice is one of a postmodern education, where identity, individuality, multiculturalism and plurality are publicly celebrated (Cahnmann-Taylor & Souto-Manning, 2010). 2. The processes that brought him to this character, this emotional place, and situated him with his peers – who share much of his positionality – were far more similar to the processes undertaken for *YouthQuake* than *Sweeney Todd*, which had been the school musical in 2017. Through a combination of improved teacher knowledge and experience of how to create platforms that allow for student autonomy and agency, and the self-knowledge that students possessed that their voice was valued and welcome, the experience, process and product was changed for the better.



Figure 56. The student cast of *Les Misérables*, 2019

The students that are discussed and detailed in this thesis are privileged in many ways, not least due to their economic situation and their school and future opportunities. However, what I have posited in the research is that they are equally culturally underprivileged. In *Les Misérables* specifically, but in all three projects detailed in this thesis, through workshop and rehearsal, these students were enabled to walk a mile in the shoes of another: in this case a member of a societal class who was poor, dispossessed, unsupported and faced an uncertain future. In workshop, students were invited to make connections between those in Aotearoa New Zealand and around the world who also face similar challenges to those that they will represent in *Les Misérables*. These self-same students were invited to give voice to those without a voice, to use their privileged position to represent something greater than themselves, whilst also having the opportunity to play in role.

As a musical, *Sweeney Todd* (in 2017) had been a success, however, during the processes I had found that, due to its scale and complexity, I had partially returned to the concept-driven aesthete of old. But not for *Les Misérables*, which I decided would be in process and product, as close to the experience of *YouthQuake* as possible. The set was pared down, making it an aesthetically interesting yet flexible space; the audience seating was once more shaped in traverse, implicating the audience once more in the narrative of the story; the actors addressed the same audiences with their singing, recognising their presence and directing their arguments towards them, although this

time, unlike during *YouthQuake*, the audience would not respond directly. Political links between the world of 19th Century France and today were explored and the results of these discussions found their way on to the stage, as each student created a character that was less a cypher for the narrative and more an authentic embodied representation of poverty, despair and dispossession.

8.9.1 Ending-beginning

And so, a thesis ends; but such an end is an arbitrary construct. The thinking, discussion, debate, argument, collaboration, and creative endeavour, detailed in this thesis, all continue.

As I write this, I am happy and excited that two projects now occupy the vacuum left by the conclusion of the previous creative work. The Community of Learning project, that I outlined in the previous section, has been given approval by those responsible at my school, and embraced by my key collaborator at our sister school. The processes that will lead to the involvement of our greater Auckland school community are being fleshed out, and the initial conversations that will begin the project will commence in July 2020. Secondly, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which so excited its cast and audiences in 2016, will be restaged at an external, larger professional theatre in 2022. The 2022 ...*Dream* we will take a collective sense of a bicultural school identity and share it with a wider Auckland and New Zealand audience. By doing so, the staff and students hope to engage its audience with debates around Te Tiriti o Waitangi, student and shared identity, Tūrangawaewae, and mana- and tangata whenua. By positioning ourselves in this new context with humility and vulnerability, there is a hope and ambition that we can offer other schools a suggestion. That suggestion is that they consider creating similarly ambitious creative events, created by their students, staff, and community, which are then shared with their school community, greater Auckland and the New Zealand arts community and beyond.

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Appendices

Appendix A: UC Ethics Approval forms



HUMAN ETHICS COMMITTEE

Secretary, Lynda Griffioen
Email: human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz

Ref: 2015/35/ERHEC

21 October 2015

Nicholas Brown
College of Education, Health & Human Development
UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY

Dear Nicholas

Thank you for providing the revised documents in support of your application to the Educational Research Human Ethics Committee. I am very pleased to inform you that your research proposal "The Pohutukawa Tree project" has been granted ethical approval.

Please note that this approval is subject to the incorporation of the amendments you have provided in your emails of 13 and 19 October 2015.

Should circumstances relevant to this current application change you are required to reapply for ethical approval.

If you have any questions regarding this approval, please let me know.

We wish you well for your research.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nicola Surtees'.

Nicola Surtees
Chair
Educational Research Human Ethics Committee

"Please note that Ethical Approval and/or Clearance relates only to the ethical elements of the relationship between the researcher, research participants and other stakeholders. The granting of approval or clearance by the Ethical Clearance Committee should not be interpreted as comment on the methodology, legality, value or any other matters relating to this research."

F E S

Appendix B: “The Pohutukawa Tree” pre-process questionnaire

Telephone: (09) 410 8667 x 723

Cell phone: 022 066 1628

Email: nbrown@westlake.school.nz

September 2015

Kia ora participant,

To help me understand where and how you are situated as a young New Zealand adult before we start “The Pohutukawa Tree project”, I would be grateful if you would answer the questions below. Please feel free to either respond in writing or as an audio file.

The questions below will be contrasted with the Structured Interviews, which will be undertaken at the end of the project.

Origins:

- 1) Please describe your whakapapa (your heritage and/or your genealogy). *E.g. where you were born, the heritage of your parents and/or their parents.*
- 2) How aware do you think you are about issues facing Aotearoa New Zealand in the present/future? *E.g. immigration, climate change, child abuse...*
- 3) As a young adult in Aotearoa New Zealand, what issues most concern you?

As a New Zealander:

- 4) Where is your Turangawaewae? *Where do you call home, or where in NZ you are most comfortable?*
- 5) What icons of New Zealand-ness do you most associate yourself with? *E.g. the All Blacks, the Kiwi (bird), the NZ flag, Pavlova, the Bach...*
- 6) If you were to introduce a person new to Aotearoa New Zealand life, where would you take them, and why? *E.g. Bastion Point, Kelly Tarlton’s, Fox Glacier, Milford Track, Christchurch...*

What do you hope to gain from the project:

- 7) How do you imagine this project might help you develop as a young adult?
- 8) Do you think that a project such as this can help you reimagine your position as a young adult?
- 9) Who do you imagine you will be when the project is completed?



Nick Brown

Appendix C: “The Pohutukawa Tree” newly written scenes

Act 2/Scene 3

Cast:

- George Atkinson
- Lawyer
- Giles Sandringham
- Police Constable
- Tane
- Roy Jnr.
- Roy
- Johnny
- Aroha’s Husband

It is a few days after the tangi for Aroha. We are outside the Te Parenga Courthouse around noon. Mr. Atkinson is in attendance, as is Roy Snr., Johnny and a group of lawyers. There is also some press, and in the shadows Aroha’s former husband (AH), working hard not to be seen. Roy Snr. and Johnny are deep in conversation, as Mr. Atkinson passes them.

Roy: Good morning Mr. Atkinson –

Johnny: Morena –

Atkinson: Morning men. *Pause.* I suspect that I will be seeing you inside.

An awkward pause.

Tane: Awkward –

Roy Jnr.: “Awkward” is not the word.

The J.P. (Giles Sandringham {GS}), who has ventured south from Auckland arrives and passes through the group.

Tane: Is that the judge?

Roy Jnr.: Yeah, but not a judge to pass judgement. This is not a court case like, you know, “innocent” or “guilty”, but rather a judicial hearing. That is where evidence is shared and then the judge makes a ruling.

Tane: OK, thanks. *Smiling.* You can tell your dad’s a lawyer.

GS: Thank you all for attending. We shall begin shortly.

The J.P. exits into the courthouse. The scene changes to the interior of the courthouse. The J.P. sits upstage centre; the press and observation boxes are stage left and stage right. The constable, who is managing the event stands.

Constable: All rise. The Honourable Dr. Giles Sandringham, J.P., presiding.

GS: Sit, sit, please do sit. We can dispense with the overbearing formality of the court. As I have said at the start of each session: this is NOT a court of law, but rather a judicial hearing. And, that

hearing is to determine the right of Mr. George Atkinson, son of the late Mr. Atkinson Snr., to sell his land here in (this quite beautiful) Te Parenga to the Chongqing Corporation of China.

At the mention of the Chinese corporation there is some noise and agitation in the court.

Constable: Quiet please. I said quiet in the court; quiet now.

GS: Yes, quite so constable. Now, submissions – not evidence mind you – submissions have been made by two parties, and it is my role in these proceedings to determine what is right and fair under these trying circumstances. Johnny Mataira please stand.

Johnny and Roy stand.

GS: Mr. Mataira –

Johnny: Ae?

GS: Sir, you have made substantial claims on the land currently owned by Mr. Atkinson, land that was once in the domain of your family –

Johnny: Whanau **and** iwi, sir –

GS: Quite. Although you once owned the land, your mother – the late Aroha Mataira – sold the land to the Atkinson family... err whānau (Pronounced badly). This is not in dispute. What is in dispute is who now owns the land after the death of Mr. Atkinson Snr.

Johnny: Ae, that it is.

GS: George Atkinson, please stand. Mr. Atkinson –

Atkinson: Yes –

GS: Sir, you assert your right to the land and indeed have a contract drawn up and signed by both your father and Mrs. Mataira, asserting that the land will belong in perpetuity to the Atkinson family.

Atkinson: That is correct, sir.

Johnny: (*Interrupting*) But as I have said sir, this is not in-keeping with Tikanga or Māori custom, sir –

GS: And this I recognise, sir, as does the Treaty of Waitangi Tribunal who asked me to conduct proceedings. *A pause.* Mr. Mataira, as you can understand the presence of a contract with Mr. Atkinson and the lack thereof for yourself is compelling, is it not? Words are important, and yes, I agree that Māori is a culture in which the ‘oral tradition’ is important. *A pause.* I think that at this point I would like the representatives from the Chongqing Corporation of China to speak. We have heard little from them, but now might be opportune. Gentlemen?

There is some discussion between members of a well-dressed group, and then a young lawyer stands.

Lawyer: My Lord –

GS: “Your Honour” will do –

Lawyer: Your Honour, we at the Chongqing Corporation of China, for whom I am a representative, would like the court and community to know that we are no threat to the way of life here in Te Parenga. In fact, we want to create a culture that will be mutually beneficial to all parties.

Johnny: How?

Mr. Atkinson: Quiet, Johnny – let the man speak.

Constable: *Sternly*. Gentleman.

Lawyer: Well, the Chongqing Corporation of China has undertaken probing research into what Te Parenga needs, and we conclude that a mall, replete with shops –

Johnny: – containing shops –

Lawyer: – with shops, will allow the community to enjoy far greater retail opportunities and also bring outlying communities into Te Parenga. This in turn will boost the local economy, considerably. Land that is not to be used for the mall will be turned to arable and dairy farming –

Roy: Where will the profits go, Mr. “smooth talker”?

Lawyer: The mall will charge standard rates for shops within the mall and will also graze its own cattle on the land it owns, and dairy products created on that land will be shipped, along with other products, back to China, to feed an ever-growing need.

Roy: *Indignant*. At the centre of this land is a tree, a sacred tree, a single Pohutukawa tree, which has been there for 200 years. It is a Kaitiaki, a guardian of Māoridom in this part of the world. It is almost all that is left of us here in this place. What will become of the tree?

Lawyer: *Casually*. It will be cut down, destroyed –

The court is distressed at the admission.

Lawyer: However, as a sign of good will, we at the Chongqing Corporation of China have decided to name the mall in honour of the tree that the Mataira family have so staunchly protected.

(Proudly) We have agreed that the mall will be known as “Whetumarama Mall”, in honour of your forebear, **and** also, we will call the food court the “Pohutukawa Tree Watering Hole”. (Very smug and pleased with himself) We truly feel that this will keep the spirit of Māoridom alive in this part of the world.

A small group of associates, and Mr. Atkinson, clap as he sits down, pleased with his work. The rest of the court are unimpressed.

Johnny: Your Honour, words alone cannot communicate how distasteful and **misjudged** – please excuse the pun – such a move would be.

GS: I do tend to agree...

A pause, during which people talk and unnoticed an old man, Aroha’s aged former husband (AH), rises.

AH: Tena koe, rangitira. Kia ora kotou katoa. Ko Rawiri Mataira toku ingoa, and I am the late husband of Aroha Mataira, and father to Johnny and Queenie. And I wish to have a korero –

GS: A what –

AH: Korero, a chance to speak with you, sir.

GS: You may address the court sir, and I will listen to your words.

AH: Kia ora, I thank you. I have in my hand a copy of the contract made between Mr. Atkinson Snr. And Aroha Mataira. It bears witness to what my mokopuna has been stating. *There is consternation and excitement in the court at the news.* However, my eyes are not what they were, so may I ask another to read it?

GS: Constable, will you do us the honour?

Constable: Of course, sir.

AH hands the frail and aged document to the constable. He reads it, surprised by its content.

GS: Constable? Please read to us the contents.

Constable: Your Honour, of course... It starts with a preamble of legalese, outlining the land and the participants in the contract... *He reads some more.* It states that it recognises the ownership of the land by the Mataira whānau, but also that the land will pass to Mr. Atkinson as per the signed contract particulars contained in this document –

Atkinson: *Interrupting, excitedly.* You see: there is nothing new here –

Constable: However, your honour, there is a codicil –

Atkinson: A what!?

Constable: An additional comment to the contract.

Atkinson: My Lord, I think that we have heard enough –

Constable: In the codicil it states that... *He reads deeply.* ...it states that “on the death of Mr. Atkinson (senior that is), the land formerly possessed by Mr. Atkinson will... *The Constable reads ever deeper.* ...will be returned, according to Māori Tikanga, to the Mataira whānau. And any claims to the land by a third party (that is anyone other than the Mataira whānau) will be rejected”. Signed this day 1950 by Aroha Mataira and George Atkinson (senior that is) –

Atkinson: This is a fraud, perpetrated by a mendacious group, with an ugly agenda –

GS: Mr. Atkinson, sit down please, sir.

Atkinson: A fraud I say –

Constable: Sit down Mr. Atkinson, sir!

Atkinson sits. There is hush. The constable continues to read.

Constable: Your Honour, there is one more, salient detail we have yet to hear.

GS: Go on.

Constable: Well, the signatures of Aroha and Mr. Atkinson have been countersigned.

GS: Countersigned? By whom?

Constable: By Police Sergeant John Speight; I recognise the signature, sir. It is most definitely authentic.

Atkinson: A fraud I say, most clearly a fr –

GS/Constable: Mr. Atkinson –

GS: Be quiet, sir, please.

Constable: Your Honour, Sergeant Speight was my predecessor, a man of utmost character and a pillar of this community. I took over his role as Police officer here in Te Parenga from him, and so I can both vouch for the man and for his signature – this is no forgery, sir.

GS: Quite so... Mr. Mataira, how came you to be in possession of this contract?

AH: Ae, matua, the contract was given to me by my late wife –

Johnny: *Gently.* Ex-wife...

AH: Ae, but by my late wife it was given, for safe keeping. She feared that at her death her house would be burned down, according to our Tikanga, and the contract she had secreted in the house, which would never have been found.

Lawyer: My Lord –

GS: Your Honour –

Lawyer: Your Honour, this is most irregular... I must protest.. I...

GS: Please speak. If you have anything further to add now is the time... Well...

Lawyer: I... I... must protest...

GS: Yes, we have got that part. Anything else?

Lawyer: I...

Constable: This contract is the most compelling evidence we have as yet heard, Your Honour. It contradicts the contract shown by Mr. Atkinson, Jr., the authenticity of which I was always dubious of –

Lawyer: Is the officer now allowed to give evidence in his own courthouse –

GS: This is NOT a court case, but a hearing, and, sir, that is exactly what I am doing. Be quiet, or I shall have you removed.

There is a quiet, but excited buzz in the courtroom. The J.P. is deeply considering his options. He calls over the constable for a discussion. The two men then stop talking and the J.P. clears his throat.

GS: Ladies and gentlemen, we have spent the last few days discussing a very trying matter – that of land ownership. We have, some would say unfairly, applied western law, based in British principles, to this matter and yet a Māori notion of what is right and fair has won the day. I fear we are too quick to judge a proud and ancient culture, with protocols that defy western norms, because we cannot quantify it, cannot measure it in an English language and Pākehā New Zealander way. This is wrong. Mr. Mataira, Johnny, Roy: I find in favour of the Matairas. The land will remain in your care.

The court breaks into excited chat.

GS: Court adjourned.

“The Pohutukawa Tree”, Act 2/Scene 5

Queenie on stage, with Johnny nearby in attendance. Roy enters furtively from behind her. Roy notices Johnny and nods to him. Johnny is impassive.

Roy: Queenie, hi.

Queenie: *Warmly.* Hi, Roy. Thanks for meeting with me.

Roy: Is all good... Got your note, eh... Johnny.

Johnny gives no response nor reaction.

Queenie: Good. You understand then?

Roy: Yer... bit shocked is all –

Queenie: Come on now Roy. From what I have learned, I don't think that this is the first time, is it?

Roy: Wha'?

Queenie: There have been other girls, yes.

Roy: Maybe... But not like you Queenie, never like you –

Queenie: You sure about that, Roy?

Roy: Yer.

Queenie: I am the only girl like me, and the only one you have ever got pregnant?

Johnny bristles and stares threateningly at Roy. Roy reacts nervously.

Roy: Well... I... I...

Queenie: Johnny, please would you?

Johnny rises, and as he does so Roy steps back in fear. Strangely though, Johnny does not go toward Roy, but rather off stage.

Roy: *Commenting on Johnny's behaviour.* I don't understand?

Queenie: Ae, all will become clear.

Roy: I love yer, Queenie, but I am too young to be a dad. I am sorry you are pregnant –

Queenie: Sorry? It's not a terminal illness, and it's not as if you had nothing to do with it, Roy...

Roy: Yer, I know... Sorry... That didn't come out right. Look Queenie, I really feel for you, and I truly lov –

Roy's love speech is arrested by the entrance on stage of Johnny, who brings with him Cassandra, or Cassie: Roy's only wife.

Cassie: Well, ain't this cosy. Curious how many of those words have floated about me, from time to time, when the need arised...

Roy: Cassie, sweetheart... I... Hey, hi... I...

Cassie: "I... am lost for words", I Think that's the phrase what you are searching for.

Roy: *Approaching Cassie.* Sweetheart. I was actually on my way home –

As Roy approaches, Cassie slaps him across the face.

Cassie: You, rude, ungrateful, two-faced, cheating pig. *To Queenie.* Thanks, love. I'll take it from here.

Queenie: Yes, of course. Goodbye Roy. If ever you should need me, or be keen to meet your child, you will find me at Tamatea, at my marae.

Queenie turns and leaves, but has to pull Johnny away, who is transfixed by Roy.

Roy: *To Cassie.* Sweetheart –

Cassie: Too late for that, Roy. That bird has flown.

Roy: But you must now that I do love you –

Cassie: Yer, just as you declared the same to that Queenie girl. Nice lass, shame really. Being a Māori, no one is really gonna care that much for her situation. But me and my family, well, tha's another matter.

Roy: I don't follow –

Cassie: I don't love you Roy, haven't for some time now, so those sugar-coated words are gonna fall pretty flat, so save you effort. Such effort that could be put to better use, say in a job, helping to support and raise your three bloody kids. D'you get me?

Roy: *Surprised.* Three? Three kids?

Cassie: Yer, when you last left me, 12 month ago, I was pregnant, would you believe it?

Roy: *Suddenly animated.* Girl or boy?

Cassie: That got your interest, eh. *Long pause. Teasingly.* A girl –

Roy dances around the stage in joy.

Roy: A girl!? Wow, Cassie, well done.

Cassie: As young Queenie pointed out, you were involved in the making, too.

Roy smiles broadly, detecting a warming in Cassie.

Cassie: Yer, but don't smile, as it aint 'appening again, right.

Roy: No, right, yes, sorry Cass.

Cassie: And Cassie or Cassandra will do, please. I am a respectable woman now. Teaching in the local primary school, wouldn't you know –

Roy: Wha'? When did that happ –

Cassie: Soon as I gave up waiting for you and took the reins of me own life. Job's pretty mint, too. Your two boys will go there and also your daughter, when her time comes.

Roy: *Warmly*. My daughter...

Cassie: You could be a good man, Roy, but you have a great deal of damage to undo. Me, your folks, the people you owe money to back home... And Queenie of course: you gotta do right by her, Roy.

Roy has been coming around to Cassie's point of view, since the revelation of a daughter.

Roy: Yer, sure, Cassie. I get it.

Cassie: Really? 'Cause if this is another ploy, another moment in which you 'charm and disarm', then you have quite misjudged my mood –

Roy: No, I do get it, truly, Cass... I mean Cassie. I have stuffed up, big time, I know. And I know that I don't deserve a second chance –

Cassie: *Warmly*. Try fifth or sixth...

Roy: Yer, that's fair. Sorry. If I –

Cassie: I think that we should call a truce, at least for now. There's lots to discuss, so why don't we head into town, into Te...?

Roy: Te Parenga.

Cassie: Yer, fine. Let's do that and then find somewhere to grab a drink and speak. I also need to find an exchange, so that I can 'phone me mum and check in with her and the kids.

Roy: *Hopefully*. Could I speak to my daughter?

Cassie: *Smiling*. I think that'd be OK. Shall we go.

Cassie turns on her heel and heads off towards town. Roy pauses for a moment and then hurries along after her.

“The Pohutukawa Tree”, Act 2/Scene 2

Cast:

- Tane
- Roy Jnr.
- Tama

Tane, Queenie’s son and Roy Jnr., Roy’s son by another relationship, sit overlooking a beach, facing west. Just beyond them stands Tama, a relative of Aroha’s from Tamatea, watching the sun go down. It is dusk.

Tane: *Smiling.* Starting to get cold, eh, matua?

Tama: *Not listening* Ae, that it is...

Tane: Might be good to head home, eh, get a jumper?

Tama: *Not listening* Ae, that we could...

The two young men, Tane and Roy Jnr., look at each other and giggle.

Roy: I see the clouds gathering, eh, matua?

Tama: *Not listening* Ae, that they are...

Tane: *Improvising.* And the bats flocking –

Roy: *Improvising.* And the lions roaring –

Tama: *Not listening* Ae, maybe...

Both Tane and Roy giggle.

Tama: Men, I may not be giving you my full attention, but I know when I am being... what’s the word? “Sassed”. *He turns and looks at them both sternly.* Please stop.

Tane and Roy are suddenly sober, respectful.

Roy: No, of course, matua –

Tane: Yes, I am so sorry, mat–

Tama: *Looking out to sea again.* Save your hollow reverence for the tangi, eh, Tane. And have some respect boy – your grandmother has just died.

A respectful pause.

Roy: So, the tangi... What’s it like? Never been to one before.

Tane: Well, I have only been to one, but it isn’t that much different to a Pākehā funeral. You know, people grieve, people sing, body gets buried... You know.

Roy: But your uncle was saying that relatives have to stay with the body for three days before they are buried. Is that right?

Tama: “Tangihanga”, men – get the term right...

Tane: Yes, matua. (*Pause*) Well the body of the dead, of Whaea Aroha, will be dressed and prepared. Her hair will be brushed, and clothes chosen for her. Whilst Aroha is prepared, we will sing karakia to her, to her wairua, or spirit, as it leaves her body and prepares for the journey back to the ancestral lands, to Hawaiiki. *Tane pauses and has a realization that Aroha is dead.*

Roy: Tane? Are you OK? Tane –

Tane: Ae, all good... Sorry...

Roy: It must be tough, you know for you, and your mum. I never really knew my grandparents. Dad was always on the move; I never lasted in a school more than eight months!

Tane: Yet look at you now – doing well at university; playing rugby for Waikato U20s. You’ve done well –

Roy: Cheers, thanks mate. It’s funny, eh, you and me, half-brothers and from two different worlds, Māori and Pākehā, and yet were not all that different from one another... *He drifts and recalls a whakatauki.* “He waka eke noa” (We are all in this together).

Tane: Ka pai, Roy! Where did that come from?

A pause.

Roy: I had this teacher, like, who was warm and funny, at a school I spent three months at, in the Bay of Plenty. Dad was working on a legal case there, or something...

Tane: And...?

Roy: And... She was Māori – (He mispronounces the word).

Tane: Māori –

Roy: Māori, yes, sorry; sorry matua –

Tama: *Disinterested* Hmmpphh!

Roy: She – Whaea Bloss was her name – she taught me a few things I still hold dear, and today is a mournful, reflective day, and suddenly I am casting my mind back there. *He smiles.*

Tane: Thanks Roy.

Roy: What for?

Tane: For being here. Mum didn’t want to or couldn’t sit still; such unresolved feeling and tension towards my grandmother, towards whaea Aroha.

Roy: All good; it’s been nice to catch up... *Pause.* Tell me more about the tangi –

Tama, suddenly taking charge.

Tama: Tangihanga. It will be here, located at Aroha’s home, in Te Parenga. On the Po Whakamutunga (final night), the whanau gather, and we will sing songs Aroha loved, in order to remember her and her life. We will tell funny stories about your grandmother –

Tane: *Slyly to Roy.* Something tells me that they will be few and far between –

Tama: It may surprise you to learn, young man, that your whaea Aroha was a well-loved, witty, crazy young woman, with a spirit, like... Well, let's say that she was a unique soul. *Remembering*. Ae. Now when the songs have finished, we will close the coffin: this has to be done before sunrise –

Roy: You'll be singing all night!?

Tama: And then Aroha will be buried, laid to rest at the foot of the beautiful Pohutukawa tree in her garden. Then, as per tradition, we will burn down her house, which through her death has become "tapu", the home in which she died.

Tane: What!? You are joking... Aren't you?

Tama: Not a joke. In Northland it has been a common part of Tikanga, or "practice" Roy, but have no fear: we will not burn down Aroha's house. *Deadpan*. You see even old relatives can have a sense of humour.

Roy: Woah, this is all, like really heavy.

Tama: You should also know, young Tane, that your mother and her mokopuna will be given a special status during and the after the tangi –

Tane: – "Tangihanga", matua.

Tama finally smiles.

Tama: Ae, ka pai, my boy.

Roy: What will that mean?

Tama: Well, the whānau of Aroha Mataira will be accorded an extra respect by the community that they are unlikely to have experienced before, and care and concern will be shown that I doubt they will have known before. And rightly so.

There is a reverent silence as they all consider what Tama has suggested and explained to the two young men.

Tama: *Remembering*. Ae, Aroha... *To the two young men*. I am glad that your whaea will be buried here; it is right.

There is further reverent silence.

Tane: *Smiling*. Starting to get cold, eh, matua?

Tama: *Not listening* Ae, that it is...

Tane: Might be good to head home, eh, get a jumper?

Tama: *Not listening* Ae, that we could...

The two young men, Tane and Roy Jnr., look at each other and giggle.

Roy: I see the clouds gathering, eh, matua?

Tane: And the bats flocking –

Roy: And the lions roaring –

Tama: *Not listening* Ae, maybe...

Both Tane and Roy giggle.

Tama: Come men – time to go home.

The three men leave the stage.

Appendix D: The Māori Education Plan

 Boys' High School

Māori Education Plan¹²¹

¹²¹ Lead author: Nick Brown.

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Introduction

Whāia te iti kahurangi ki te tūohu koe me he maunga teitei!¹²²

This Education Plan is designed to outline the strategic pathway being taken by [REDACTED] Boys' High School (WBHS) Senior Leadership Team (SLT), in collaboration with the school's key stakeholders: Māori students, parents, the Whānau Board, the Kaitiaki (Māori Dean), Deans, staff and Māori staff.

The focus of the Education Plan is to outline the foundations, processes and direction the school wishes to travel in, in order to successfully support all Māori students to achieve as Māori. It is a guide for SLT and teachers alike, and will be made available to any other interested party, keen to engage with it.

Furthermore, this Māori Education Plan contains a variety of perspectives and analysis, from SLT to student voice to the voice of Whānau Hui. Each has made a valuable contribution as to how [REDACTED] can positively impact the lives of the young Māori men in our care.

¹²² *Seek the treasure you value most dearly: if you bow your head, let it be to a lofty mountain.* This whakatauki is about aiming high or for what is truly valuable, but its real message is to be persistent and don't let obstacles stop you from reaching your goal.

Executive Summary

This Education Plan is designed to a. address the [REDACTED] Strategic Plan #2¹²³, b. create a school context, here at [REDACTED], which is truly bicultural and recognises the place and value of Tangata Whenua, and c. aid all staff and parents/whānau to address the relative underachievement of our Māori students, relative to their Pākehā contemporaries.

The Plan draws upon disparate school documents, which set the scene for WBHS and its obligations towards Tangata Whenua: the most recent school E.R.O. Report (P. 4), and a section on how WBHS engages with the NZ Curriculum and Te Tiriti o Waitangi (P. 9).

This Education Plan also details the manner in which [REDACTED] has approached Statistics & Examination Analyses (P. 17), and also the Māori Student Voice (P. 6), in order to better understand how young Māori men are situated as students at WBHS. To gain a truly holistic perspective, the voice of the whānau has been included in the Whānau Perspective (P. 5), and the Whanau Form Class, 2016 document (P. 24). Crucially, this Education Plan also suggests new ways for staff to engage with Māori students, which reflect the plan's ambitions: For the Teacher: Advice on Classroom Practice (P. 12).

This Education Plan recognises the current patterns of school & student performance and limitations at WBHS, which can limit our Māori students achieving to their potential. It also recognises that WBHS has some way to go to before it can declare itself a truly bicultural school. However, the plan posits a variety of corrective practices, with which all can engage, to the benefit of our Māori students, and the student body as a whole. This Education Plan also suggests that the achievement of the stated ambition of the plan can only be achieved through a combined effort of staff, students and whānau.

The initial timeline for the [REDACTED] Maori Education Plan is 2015-2018. It is believed that if this plan can be successfully disseminated, discussed and implemented then it will positively fulfil the ambitions stated in paragraph one, and the goals detailed on P. 15.

¹²³ See Appendix 1: Strategic Plan #2

The Educational Review Office last visited WBHS in Term 1, 2014. The following statement – on the promotion of educational success for Māori students – was included in their final report.

How effectively does the school promote educational success for Māori, as Māori?

The school is very effective at promoting educational success for Māori and is increasingly effective at promoting Māori students success as Māori. Haka competitions and other key cultural school events are part of the inclusive environment promoted at the school.

The board has committed significant financial and personnel resources to provide a wider range of support structures for Māori students. Led by the school Kaitiaki, who is also the Head of Te reo Māori¹²⁴, professional development is providing meaningful and useful learning for staff. Well considered strategic decision making and action has benefitted Māori learners. This is evident in Māori student achievement which has steadily improved in Years 11-13. A useful next step is to develop self-review reports that clearly show how well Māori students are achieving in Years 9 and 10.

Whānau (the Whānau Board) have developed their own strategic plan in response to the school's strategic plan for Māori success. Continuing consultation with Māori whānau could now accelerate key actions to realise agreed goals. Further professional development could highlight the commitment of school leaders and increase outcomes for students.

The school is well positioned to accelerate its approaches for promoting Māori student success as Māori. The school could use more robust benchmarks from the Ministry of Education Māori education strategy, *Ka Hikitia*, to consider how well it enacts its role as Treaty of Waitangi partners.

¹²⁴ Since 2016, Matua Johnny Waititi has been Kaitiaki and HoD Te Reo Māori.

Whānau Perspective

In creating this Māori Education Plan, much attention has been given to the Whole School Strategic Plan, and specifically point number two¹²⁵: “Biculturalism in a multicultural environment”. Furthermore, the Whānau Board of Trustees has met regularly (and has been well-attended by staff and parents) and this has led to the creation of a Māori Excellence Document¹²⁶, which (although a recent development) will be a factor in the school’s planning and execution. This document in turn has built upon the success of the Whānau Form Class (WW01)¹²⁷, which currently stands at 38 students.

WBHS School Strategic Plan, #2:

“WBHS will improve the wellbeing of *all* students and staff by making the school more welcoming to its many cultures, by making it a genuinely bicultural institution, and by increasing *all* students’ sense of belonging:

- The cultural competencies of *ako*, *whanaungatanga*, *tangata whenuatanga*, *manaakitanga* and *wānanga*, which emphasise partnership, community and belonging, will underpin all of our teaching and learning and interactions with our communities;
- We will have a genuinely bicultural ethos and physical environment, and will begin to develop a plan for a school Marae;
- We will be a school that reviews itself consistently against our bicultural and multicultural priorities to ensure that we increasingly reflect our diverse community;
- Reciprocal consultation will be embedded into self-review practices;
- We will encourage and support an increasingly multilingual school environment;
- International connections for students and staff will be developed;
- Teachers will have the ongoing support through their professional development programmes to ensure that the school can, over time, become a genuinely bicultural institution within a multicultural environment.

Māori Student Voice:

¹²⁵ See Appendix 1: WBHS Strategic Plan #2

¹²⁶ See Appendix 3: Māori Excellence Document

¹²⁷ See Appendix 2: Whanau Form Class, 2016

Between July and August 2015, students were invited to be interviewed, in order to better understand how they were situated as a Māori student at WBHS.

The number of students who responded to the questionnaire was sixty, which is slightly less than half the cohort.

Small Group discussions for Māori students at Westlake Boys' High School

Kia ora kotou katoa. The purpose of this discussion process is to gain some understanding around how Māori students see themselves as students at WBHS. I am especially keen to see how well they are served as young Māori, and if and where they are not being fully supported and nourished. With this knowledge we can then consider changes to benefit Māori students.

Below are the questions that I would like us to use in the discussion, but feel free to allow the students to drift on and off topic, if it benefits the ambition of the discussions.

1. Can you describe what it is like for you (in general terms) to be a student at Westlake Boys' High School (WBHS).

2. Can we please ask how you see yourself as a young Māori adult: how connected are you to your Marae, whanau, iwi/hapu or elements of Māoridom/Māoritanga?

✚ *Of those that answered, 95% said "yes, I feel connected" and 5% "less so". Those that stated yes, listed experiences such as tangi, whanau get-togethers and a sense of whanaungatanga. One student described himself as "disconnected".*

3. If you are well-connected, do you think that our school helps develop these relationships described in Q. 2?

4. If you are not well-connected, do you think that our school could/should do more to develop these relationships described in Q. 2?

5. Do you feel that, as a young Māori adult learner, you are well-nourished, supported, and nurtured at WBHS?

✚ *The consensus was by 'some' teachers and also SLT, but especially Hemi Te Wano and Hamish McKerrow, Steve McCracken and Nick Brown; one student stated that "nourishment" was dependent on the teacher; another that there needs to be more opportunity to be supported/nurtured as Māori. Another student stated that support of Māori students was evident within sports contexts, but was lacking in the classroom.*

6. In a class in which Māori students are thriving what does the class culture look like?

✚ *It looks "loud"; there is a strong student connection between peers; there is more chat than quiet; students are not treated as individuals but are a "community"; there is a variety of foci; it*

is interactive; the teacher shows “patience”; the class is physical/hands-on; student welfare is more important than the material being studied; there is a great deal of “care” shown by the teacher; the teacher is “warm” towards his students; there is a use and acceptance of humour by all; positive relationships are modelled and expected in class.

7. In a class in which Māori students are struggling what does the class culture look like?

✚ *“Loud”; not on task; windows breaking; too singular a focus (e.g. in science, mathematics); too much fooling around due to a lack of understanding; regular and dis-proportional punishment¹²⁸; some students feel picked on if they struggle to understand; teachers favouring academically achieving students; teachers becoming angry when a question is repeated too often.*

8. What staples (or elements) of good teaching are evident when a class is supporting and successfully nurturing Māori students?

✚ *The teacher allows modest off-topic chat; fun and pleasure is a class focus; there is a strong visual element; the class is social; there is no nagging; there is inspiration to learn; care; a teacher who stops and listens; a teacher who demonstrates patience; there is a comfort/mutual respect between teacher and student(s); banter/social quality in class, yet still focused; positive interaction between class and teacher; minimal “chalk and talk”.*

9. If you are a student who is a member of the Māori Form Class can you explain why you chose to be in the form, and what does the form class offer you as a Māori student?

✚ *Community; friendship.*

10. Being a Dean, and supporting all students at WBHS, is a challenging and rewarding role. When dealing with Māori students what do the Deans do well, or not so well?

11. Please, are there any other ideas, thoughts or observations that you would like to make around how Māori students can be better supported here at WBHS.

Ma whero ma pango ka oti ai te mahi.

¹²⁸ At Deans Detentions I have noted the frequency of detentions resulting from seemingly low grade misdemeanours, e.g. lateness; talking when actually helping a friend. Some detentions have been given because a student has not achieved a pre-determined level/end point, which had been set at the start of the class.

NB It should be noted that a large number of our young Māori men do see themselves as currently disconnected from a sense of their identity as Māori¹²⁹. In essence, these young men have a modest notion of what it is to be Māori, but are disconnected from a robust and rewarding relationship with Te Ao Māori, Tikanga, the Marae, and also are likely to speak little or no Te Reo Māori.

¹²⁹ These are from responses generated from a Māori student questionnaire, in 2015.

Westlake Boys' High School is dedicated to the principles of social justice as demonstrated in Te Tiriti o Waitangi. These principles are further enshrined in the current New Zealand Curriculum, to which WBHS is wholly committed.

In January 2016, as part of WBHS' bicultural focus (and whole school professional learning) the entire WBHS staff spent a day at Unitec's Te Noho Kotahitanga Marae, during which lecturers from Unitec led staff through a day-long workshop. Part of this workshop was a process drama in which participants were endowed with roles as rangitira, discussing the virtue of signing the treaty, on the night before the document was presented at Waitangi. Staff responses were universally positive about the experience, and indicate future pathways for PD and PL:

General Feedback

Feedback suggested that staff were proud of the school taking the step to be uncomfortable, and push people out of the norm, and that making this a genuine learning experience, was more relevant than any biculturalism PD that may have been done at school previously. Staff appreciated being sat inside a wharenui, and being welcomed onto the marae; an experience new to many. They enjoyed the opportunity to experience a genuine powhiri, and have the process explained to them.

Specific Learning

The feedback suggested that the session on Te Tiriti o Waitangi was long overdue. The delivery was excellent, and made them reflect, not only on the principles surrounding Te Tiriti, but also on their own teaching and the student learning. Staff were complimentary of being able to experience, first hand, the concept of ako throughout the session. Some staff felt that they were already able to implement some of the concepts explained into their teaching, and for others, it was a brand new, and enlightening, experience that will benefit them and their students in future¹³⁰.

As a school we have also found great benefit utilising support documents, which accompany *The New Zealand Curriculum Online*¹³¹. The ideas and processes in these pages has aided our thinking around the execution of further PD and PL with the staff here at WBHS.

"The Treaty of Waitangi Principle" suggests that a school puts "students at the centre of teaching and learning", and that it "affirms New Zealand's unique identity." Furthermore, *The New Zealand Curriculum* "acknowledges the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi, and

¹³⁰ WBHS Staff Hui and Biculturalism Feedback, February 2016.

¹³¹ <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/Principles/Treaty-of-Waitangi/About>

the bicultural foundations of New Zealand. All students have the opportunity to acquire knowledge of te reo Māori me ōna Tikanga.”¹³²

As a school this means engaging in Te Ao Māori with staff through PD and PL, as suggested in the above example at Unitec, and also locating it in the experience of Māori and Pākehā students, as also in the lives of visiting students from overseas.

At a macrocosmic level, SLT and staff have undertaken the learning of waiata. Further to this, SLT greet staff at briefings and in emails using te reo Māori where appropriate. All staff have been encouraged to use te reo when and where possible in dealings with all staff, students and parents, regardless of cultural background. Staff have also been encouraged to use Tikanga with their students and classes, especially at the start of the year or term, or with a new class, when a Māori precept (such as whanaungatanga) can be subtly embedded in the class culture. At a microcosmic level, faculties, departments and individual teachers are beginning to develop authentic units of work for students, which engage in the issues and obligations inherent in Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

To undertake these expectations successfully will hopefully enable Māori students to begin (or continue) to succeed as Māori, by recognising their located-ness (or Turangawaewae). Such an undertaking will also demonstrate that WBHS has high expectations for its Māori students.

WBHS has also created ongoing and authentic links between whānau and school, through the Whānau Board. These interactions have had a positive impact on the bicultural ambitions of WBHS, as seen in the Māori Excellence Document¹³³. A Whānau Hui occurs once a month, and are well-attended. The open and authentic engagement between school and the Whānau Board reflects the advice found in *The New Zealand Curriculum Principles*:

*The school consulted its Māori community and called on their expertise to provide advice and guidance. Māori were well represented on the board. A strategic plan outlined a planned approach to raising the achievement of Māori learners. Trustees made available sufficient funding to provide for a Māori dimension across the school*¹³⁴.

In regards of engaging with the school’s “Māori community” more deeply, the Māori student body has also been engaged with, and were invited to answer a student

¹³² New Zealand Curriculum, P. 9.

¹³³ See Appendix 2.

¹³⁴ *The New Zealand Curriculum Principles: Foundations for Curriculum Decision-Making*, July 2012, P. 18.

questionnaire in 2015 that attempted to see a. how they were located as a Māori student at WBHS, and b. what we as a school can do to enable Māori students to succeed in the WBHS school context. The students' responses are outlined in the previous section: Māori Student Voice.

Finally, there is an authentic desire to include staff in the process of moving forward in the WBHS bicultural ambition, and staff appear keen to be more greatly involved:

Going forward

The overall experience for staff, appears to be positive, and one that staff believe should continue in future. They enjoyed the genuine learning experience, and much of the feedback was around how they could make their lessons more genuine. Some staff have asked for more advice and guidance on Te Reo Māori, and pronunciation, and some have asked for more detail on Te Ao Māori and Tikanga. Some staff are still questioning the reason behind the strategic priority, and this can be reinforced further. Overall, staff are more engaged in this than ever before. Momentum has been established, and staff have gained confidence in this area, and are willing to try things in the classroom to enhance the teaching and learning environment.

For the Teacher: Advice on Classroom Practice

Introduction

It is part of WBHS' ambition that the ideas and ambitions expressed in this Māori Education Plan will positively impact what happens in the classroom, for all students. For some teachers this will be a new challenge, but one that it is hoped will also be rewarding. Below the reader will find listed some ideas around classroom practice, ideas that it is hoped will enable teachers to be a successful educator in a bicultural, New Zealand context.

Knowledge of Māori Concepts & Precepts

In Te Ao Māori, the following concepts and precepts are crucial. As a consequence, to include these in a classroom will allow Māori students to better understand their world as Māori and to learn as Māori, but will also stimulate the thinking and behaviour of non-Māori students:

Concept – “Ako”: is a reciprocal way of learning. It recognises that the teacher is also the learner, and that a student can also be a teacher. Ako can blend successfully with “Inquiry Learning”.

Example of Classroom Practice: undertake a project that you, as the teacher, only know (or comprehend) a modest amount more than the students (or “akonga”). As a class discuss and distribute roles and responsibilities in developing research to help the class engage with the new project and knowledge. Then allow individual (or groups of) students to take responsibility to teach the other members of the class. Where possible, give the students credit for doing so. Where possible co-construct the manner of the assessment, using NZQA Achievement Standards as the assessment tool¹³⁵.

Concept – “Tuakana-teina”: is where one older, or more experienced, student mentors a younger, or less experienced, student. This could be either in an academic or pastoral capacity.

Example of Classroom Practice: Year 12 students who have successfully navigated a challenging course the year before (in Year 11), return to the same Year 11 class, and help mentor and guide current Year 11 students through the challenges and rigours of the course. Alternatively, senior students (Year 12 or 13) work with Deans (the pastoral team), in giving support to students new to WBHS (in Year 9), in order to help with their acclimatisation.

¹³⁵ <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/qualifications-standards/qualifications/ncea/subjects/>

Concept – “Whānau/whanaungatanga”: to develop a whānau from a class of disparate students, and to inculcate a sense of togetherness or belonging.

Example of Classroom Practice: engage in a task or unit of work that enables students to learn about each other, and their commonalities, similarities and inter-connectedness. Such a task or unit could be around “identity”, during which students explore their “Whakapapa”. Whakapapa is an individual’s lineage, their family tree, and celebrates those who have come before, enabling their existence. Classroom practice could begin with the sharing of basic data, such as where a student was born and where their parents are from. The teacher could model this by sharing their Whakapapa, which might positively impact relationships in the class, as connections are made between class and teacher.

Concept – “Mihimihi”: is a manner of introduction, which can be performed in either Te Reo Māori or English. A mihi could be linked to your Whakapapa, in that you describe in your mihi where you are from. In Te Ao Māori, this would normally include three things, which connect you spiritually to Aotearoa New Zealand: your *mountain* (“maunga”); your *ocean* (“te moana”) and your *waka*, or the mode of transport that brought you to Aotearoa.

Example of Classroom Practice: at the start of a new class allow the students to build relationships with each other by performing a Mihimihi, at first to each other (in pairs), and then latterly as a whole class sharing. Encourage the students to use Te Reo Māori where they can, or when, the students are sharing, parallel the mihimihi with words a speaker could use from Te Reo Māori.

Concept – “Tikanga”: is the customary practice of Tangata Whenua, of Māori. A Powhiri (a ceremony of greeting on a Marae) is a good example of Tikanga.

Example of Classroom Practice: again, at the start of a term or new class, a teacher can (with her or his students) co-construct the Tikanga that the class agree to abide by. These can be the principles, ideals or rules by which the class will run, and can be a way of guaranteeing comfort for both teacher and student. Such Tikanga, or principles, might include beginning the class with a Karakia (Māori prayer and dedication) and ending the class with sharing of work, with feedback and feed forward.

Final Thoughts

Please note that the ideas listed above are suggestive, and only a start point. However, further to the advice above, a teacher should take time to learn how to pronounce students’ names correctly; asking for help with pronunciation from students is perfectly acceptable (in fact encouraged) in Te Ao Māori.

Teachers should also be aware of subtle differences in behaviour by Māori students in their care. Some good advice is do not expect a student in a one-on-one conversation to look the teacher in the eye. In Te Ao Māori this is inappropriate. A Māori student will also try to humble himself in the presence of a teacher, and this can be seen in the student trying to appear lower than the teacher. This may result in a Māori student sitting in the presence of the teacher, when the teacher expects them to “stand up straight and look me in the eye.” Subtle cultural differences can lead to unfortunate tensions, which in turn can damage relationships.

For further ideas consult “Talking Past Each Other!?”, by Joan Metge & Patricia Kinloch¹³⁶.

¹³⁶ Victoria University Press, 2001.

Goals, 2018+

- We will improve the wellbeing of *all* students and staff by making the school more welcoming to its many cultures, by making it a genuinely bicultural institution, and by increasing *all* students' sense of belonging;
- The cultural competencies of ako, whanaungatanga, tangata whenuatanga, manaakitanga and wānanga, which emphasise partnership, community and belonging, will underpin all of our teaching and learning and interactions with our communities;
- We will have a genuinely bicultural ethos and physical environment, and will begin to develop a plan for a school Marae;
- We will be a school that reviews itself consistently against our bicultural and multicultural priorities to ensure that we increasingly reflect our diverse community;
- Reciprocal consultation will be embedded into self-review practices;
- Teachers will have the ongoing support through their professional development programmes to ensure that the school can, over time, become a genuinely bicultural institution within a multicultural environment.

Events

- Staff PD and PL around Matariki¹³⁷, June/July each year
- Ongoing PD/PL around Tikanga, Te Reo, Te Ao Māori, and Māoritanga
- A Pōwhiri (with appropriate Tikanga) for the opening of the new Languages block
- New signage around WBHS, in both Te Reo and English
- School production: bicultural elements to be included in 2020 as they were in “A Midsummer Night’s Dream”, 2016
- Positive student engagement with, and execution of, Kapa haka from 2016
- Attendance and performance at ASB Polyfest 2018+¹³⁸
- Waka Ama
- Appointment of new HoD Māori (Matua Johnny Waititi) in 2016
- Building plans for a Marae, and education plans for all WBHS students to engage with this new facility

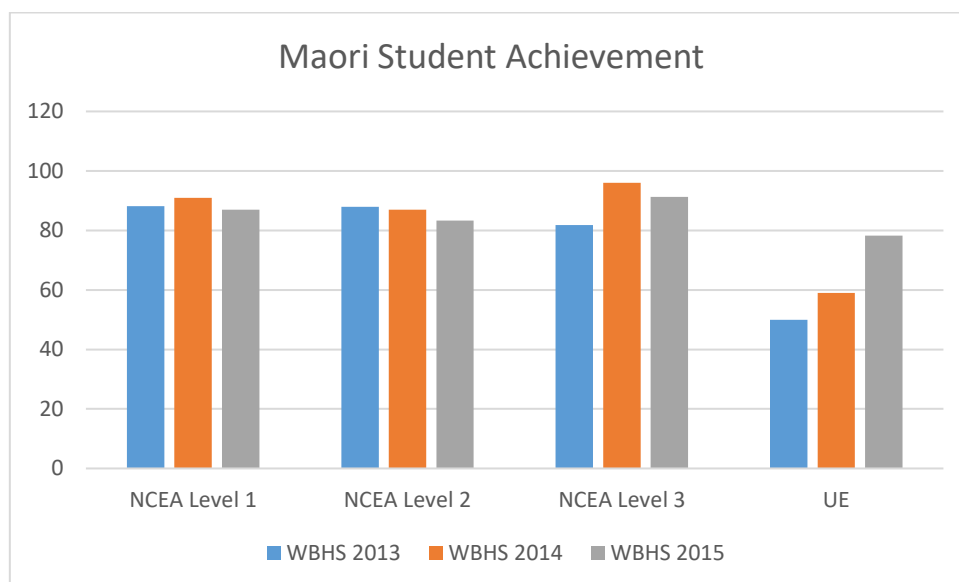
¹³⁷ The Māori New Year.

¹³⁸ <http://www.asbpolyfest.co.nz/>

Statistics & Examination Analysis

Data from recent Māori student achievement continues to be a central driver in our cycle of reflection and action. Data from 2015 academic success can be found in this section, and how this relates to building further and greater success for our Māori students.

How well are our Maori students achieving and progressing at all NCEA levels?

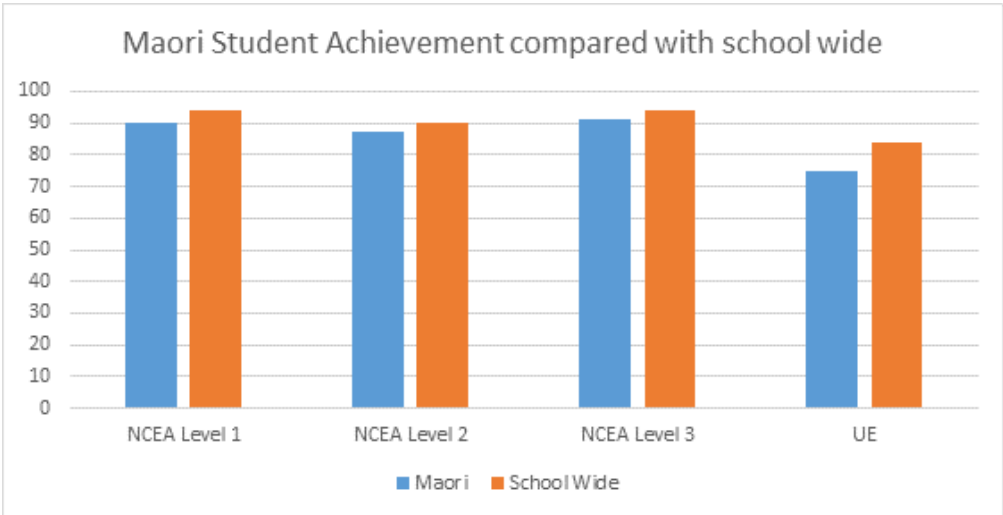


Overall, Māori students are achieving positive academic results at all NCEA levels. The results have taken a slight dip since 2014, however, they remain, overall, reasonably consistent. As well as the information presented above, one Māori student achieved Excellence Endorsement at Level 1, and two Māori students gained Excellence Endorsement at Level 3. It is pleasing to see the increase in percentage of Māori students gaining University Entrance.

How well are our Māori students participating, achieving and progressing at all levels of the Cambridge pathway?

Māori students are achieving very well in all aspects of the Cambridge International Examinations pathway. Māori students at IGCSE gained a 100% A*-C pass rate. At AS Level the pass rate for Māori students 100% A*-D. Only one student studied a subject at A2.

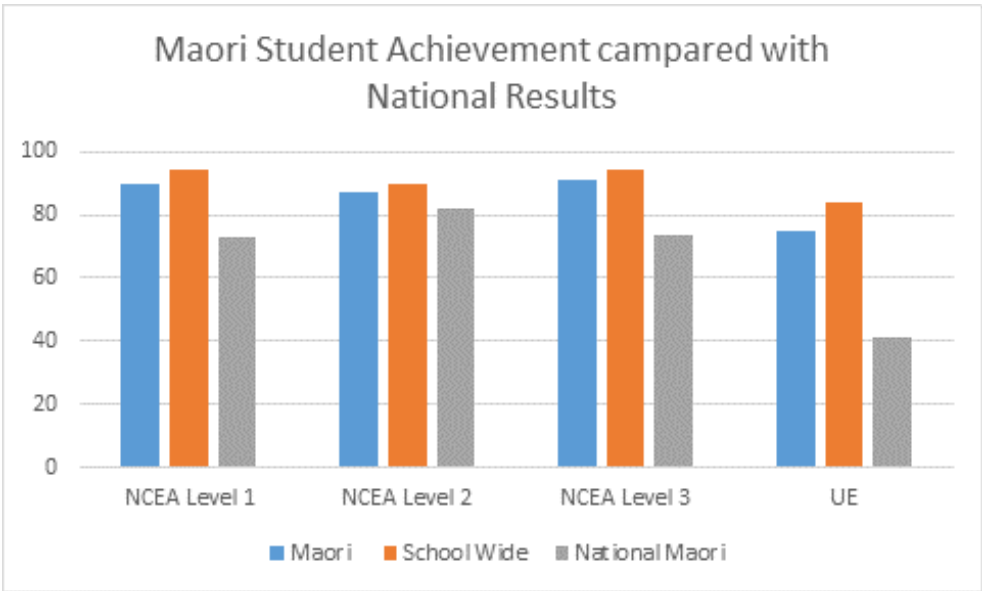
What comparisons can be made between the performance of Māori students and other students in school?



Māori students at Westlake Boys High School are performing at a slightly lower than their peers at NCEA. The biggest gap in results is in the comparison of all students and Māori students achieving University Entrance, with a difference of 9%.

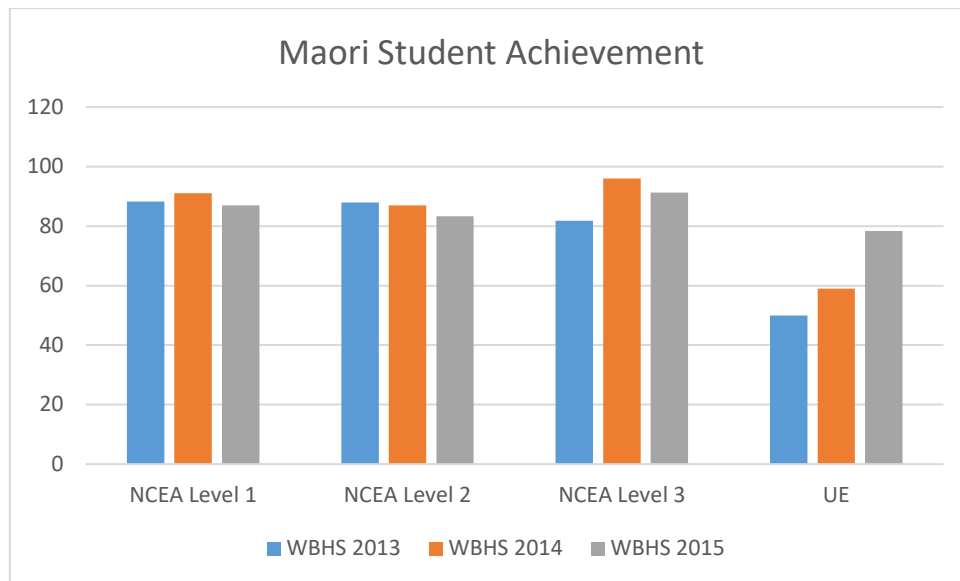
With the consistent difference in percentages of achievement, this suggests that there are still further improvements to be made with these students. Māori students should be achieving at or above school wide data, especially with the resource and focus on their learning.

Do Māori students at our school perform better or worse than Māori students nationally?



Māori students at Westlake Boys High School perform above the National Māori rates at all levels. The largest difference is our UE results. This is positive, and something we can all be proud of.

What chronological and longitudinal patterns or trends can we see?



We can see, that, overall, Māori student achievement is consistent. There is a concern that there appears to be a slight decrease in the results for each level in 2015 compared with 2014. UE entrance results are pleasing, and a marked improvement on 2013.

The cohort from 2013, as Level 1 students have remained similar in terms of pass rates, except for an improvement in Level 3.

**What does the performance of Māori students suggest about their levels of engagement?
Are retention rates as high as for other student groups?**

The academic results would indicate that Māori students are, on the whole, engaged and achieving positive results. It is pleasing to see consistent grades being achieved by Māori students at all levels. There gap between Level 3 and UE is narrowing, and this is positive too. We must still ensure that the courses the students are studying at Level 3 do meet the requirements for UE.

Retention of Māori students continues to increase year on year, purely based on student numbers. It is pleasing that Māori students are staying at school longer and wanting to achieve success academically and gain their University Entrance. There is a changing perception though, within our school, that Māori students are only good at practical, 'hands on' subjects. Focus through the strategic priorities of Biculturalism, is assisting with this change.

What does the data tell us about Māori succeeding as Māori?

The data suggests that Māori students are achieving well. It is difficult to measure the success of Māori as Māori with the data available, other than through the students that take Te Reo Māori as a subject. This data is available, but is not a true reflection on the overall Māori student population, due to the low numbers.

However, we know that Māori students are offered course, activities and events that acknowledge them, as Māori, and allow them to succeed as Māori. These include Haka, sport, and celebration evenings. Teaching and learning methods are developing, as a school, and we are hopeful of seeing this improve over time.

What are the implications for our curriculum and for teaching and learning?

Māori students' academic achievement rates need to improve further. The implication is that teachers need to be aware of this and develop strategies in line with *Ka Hikitia* to assist our Māori students in achieving even higher academic grades.

Progress in this area has been made at WBHS, but it is measured and planned. Cultural competencies though *Tataiako* are now promoted, particularly through the new Junior Planning Template. This should see an impact in the senior school too.

Appendix 1: Strategic Objective #2

Westlake Boys High School Strategic Plan: 2016

Strategic Objective #2: Biculturalism in a multicultural environment

We will improve the wellbeing of all students and staff by making the school more welcoming to its many cultures, by making it a genuinely bicultural institution, and by increasing all students' sense of belonging.

Objective	Actions Required	Dates			Staff	Success Criteria	Resources [including time]	Review Comments
		Terms 1-3 2016	Term 4 2016	2017 - 2020				
The cultural competencies of ako, whanaungatanga, tangata whenuatanga, manaakitanga and wānanga, which emphasise partnership, community and belonging, will underpin all of our teaching and learning and interactions with our communities	Update current documentation to include aspects <i>Tataiako</i>	Nov	Review		SLT	SLT to check with their faculties to ensure documentation does reflect <i>Tataiako</i>	SLT time	
	'Māori achieving as Māori' is clearly articulated and modelled	June	Review		SMM JTW	Māori achieving as Māori is understood with greater clarity than before. The school conducts reviews and collaborates in recognisably Maori ways <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waka Ama Kapa Haka Marae visits 	Time Funding for activities	
	All staff are able to identify all priority learners in their classes	March	Review		HOD's SLT		Time and relief budget if required	
	Māori students are engaged in teaching and learning and are successful in the classroom	Ongoing	Review		HOD's SLT	Through lesson observations, staff are able to accurately identify priority learners and address their needs	Relief budget if required	
	Māori students pass rate are equivalent to school wide averages and above national averages	June	Review		NXB			
	Māori students pass rate are equivalent to school wide averages and above national averages	April	Review		SMM JTW NXB	Through lesson observations and reflection, staff are able to identify Māori students and are able to recognise key learning habits of individual students Māori Dean to target Maori students at risk of failing.	NA NA NA	
	The wider Westlake community is engaged with the school and can be consulted with when required							

	Local iwi and hapu are acknowledged as important to our school and relationships are continued to be built					Publish Māori Education Plan for WBHS Publish Māori achievement targets for 2016 Regular whanau meetings are held Regular Pasifika Meetings are held Regular PTA meetings are held		
We will have a genuinely bicultural ethos and physical environment, and will begin to develop a plan for a school Marae	<p><i>Te Tiriti o Waitangi</i> is acknowledged by all staff</p> <p>Signage is reviewed and updated to acknowledge our bicultural ethos</p> <p>Plan for a marae is discussed</p> <p>School Tikanga is considered and outlines</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Review</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Review</p>		<p>All staff</p> <p>BoT SLT</p> <p>SLT</p> <p>SLT JTW</p> <p>SLT JTW</p>	<p>Staff are able to articulate and demonstrate the principles of the treaty Signage is updated throughout the school with appropriate translations/dual language</p> <p>Discussions around property include marae planning</p> <p>Welcoming guests to WBHS appropriately happens and is reviewed</p> <p>Opening and blessings are conducted in culturally appropriate ways</p>	<p>Time</p> <p>\$ for signage Time</p> <p>Time Budget planning</p> <p>Time \$ for koha</p> <p>Time \$ for koha</p>	
We will be a school that reviews itself consistently against our bicultural and multicultural priorities to ensure that we increasingly reflect our diverse community	<p>All documentation will reflect this strategic priority</p> <p>Representation of whanau on the BoT</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Apr</p>	<p>Review</p> <p>Review</p>		<p>SLT</p> <p>BoT Whanau</p>	<p>Documentation, such as Appraisal, Curriculum documents and school policies are reviewed through a cultural lens Whanau are represented at the highest level, on the BOT</p>	<p>Time</p> <p>Time \$</p>	
Reciprocal consultation will be embedded into self-review practices	<p>Consultation is ongoing with whanau, iwi and hapu regarding school strategic direction and Maori learners</p> <p>Consultation with wider communities is started</p>	Ongoing	Review		SLT	Communities are contacted through whanau, iwi, hapu and Kaumatua to discuss self-review and strategic planning	Time	
Teachers will have the ongoing support through their professional development programmes to ensure that the school	Staff will be given support, through PD, to develop WBHS as a bicultural institution	<p>Apr</p> <p>June</p>	<p>Review</p> <p>Review</p>		<p>SLT</p> <p>SMM</p>	<p>All staff will attend Unitec Marae to undertake ToW workshop Review of workshop undertaken through PD time</p>	<p>Time \$ for workshop Time</p>	

can, over time, become a genuinely bicultural institution within a multicultural environment								
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Appendix 2: Whanau Form Class, 2016+

✚ The Whanau Westlake 01 (Form Class) came about as a “stepping stone” towards the long term WBHS strategic plan of the school having a Wharenui

✚ There are currently 38 students in the group from different houses

Routine

As discussed at the recent Whānau Hui, so far this year there has only been enough time for administration.

On a Tuesday all students are at the Māori assembly in M4, with students from other form classes.

The regular routine in the 15 minutes available is:

- Students remove their shoes and find a chair – there are not enough desks as there are 38 students.
- Students stand up and we start with a karakia – so far this year we have started with one they learnt from Matua Hemi and now students have been taught others by Matua Johnny. The students are being encouraged to lead karakia, be proud, not whakama (ashamed; bashful). We sometimes start karakia on the first bell to allow more time for other things.
- Matua Johnny speaks about Haka, Kapa Haka, Waka Ama, Te Reo Māori classes, Performing Arts credits, parakuihi (breakfast), whanau hui and anything else Māori.
- Whaea Clare will hand out notes to individuals from learning support, academic deans, sports coaches etc. – this usually happens while Matua Johnny is speaking to save time. Some days there are about 20 slips to hand out.
- Whaea Clare takes a paper roll and enters it on to KAMAR later.
- Whaea Clare will give notices for the day from staff briefing or emails received from house leaders/coaches/Deans e.g. House Assembly meeting places, signing up for athletics, student id photos. Sometimes this can include a general message on attendance or looking after their shoes/clothes, keeping the room tidy etc.
- We then read the Daily Notices and pin them on the notice board – usually just the headings as there is not enough time.

- And then the bell goes, students are dismissed and put their shoes back on as they exit.
- Usually one or two students stay behind to talk to Whaea or Matua.
- A couple of times a week we have House Leaders, Coaches or Kaitiaki Nick come to see students.

Future Innovations:

- Mihi/pepeha (spoken introduction) – they did this last year in form time.
- Start a Phone list to be shared with parents – an idea bought up at Whānau Hui last year.
- Leadership roles – opportunities for the students – an idea bought up at Whānau Hui last year.
- A student Incentive/badge/tie – an idea bought up at Whānau Hui last year
- The Academic Dean said she will come and visit to help them with setting goals, checking credits etc.
- Learn a waiata (student idea this year).
- Tuakana-teina (peer mentoring).
- Students encouraged to learn about their culture and heritage (as suggested from the student survey in 2015).
- Guest speakers? – Possibly not enough time in form time, but maybe organise something on a day when there is a late start.
- Find out what parents and students want from Whānau Form Class; how can we best serve our young men.

Student feedback from interviews undertaken in 2015:

Of those Māori students surveyed and were in Whānau Form Class, these students chose to go in to the Whānau Form class for “community and friendship”.

Appendix E: Cast Interview (transcription notes)

<i>Time</i>	<i>Discussion Point</i>	<i>Notes</i>
1:25secs	<p>Experience of being involved the production: G – the relationships with people; working on three sides; working with and learning about the Maori world and culture. E learning about the whakawhanaungatanga and the development of a family unit. D and the cry that was used to draw the group together, which A called as Oberon, even at Laser Tag that they attended to team bond. M and how the actors were allowed to develop their characters and really feel the role in performance. A enjoyed how the different characters were seen in the performance and how much it made his first year at senior school, especially as a Year 9. W: “what is this guy up to” which is what he spoke to his parents at the start – very sceptical, but as camp showed it could work, and also watched how people grew he felt that this was “very cool”, it “really does work”.</p>	Student names have been replaced with letters for anonymity.
6:15	<p>A: we all feel closer to the Maori world, and although it’s everywhere in NZ but we don’t see it, but now, through the experience. Maori is such a prominent cultural element in NZ, but ignored/background, but now we feel better connected. The Fairies being in the background, influential but somewhat invisible, was a good metaphor for the NZ condition we experience.</p>	
7:30mins	<p>G and J as young Maori and their experience. G keen and excited to embrace and learn (quite a lot) about that element of my cultural life. Started off ambivalent that she was auditioning as a Fairy (meh!) but then the process showed so much more. J only just</p>	

	started to get into his culture when he started at school, and this production and process excited and satisfied.	
9:30	Describing the production to friends: A – if you want to experience NZ culture in a nutshell come see this play; E – the mysticism and magic of this hidden culture, the roots, can be seen in this production; NB uses a former student to discuss Turangawaewae and the start of the project.	
12:30	New insights as a young New Zealander: W – def Maori culture for someone who was disinterested and uninterested and learning the culture and he now wants to correct those people engaged in cultural elements that people are doing wrong. He feels an ownership and is keen to show how it should be done right. He has found a respect for the culture; J – the three-sided stage and the layering of Te Ao Maori, and that through theatre we can explore new ideas and a shared culture; A – there are no boundaries between the cultures, but these have been created and in theatre we can take away the boundaries and maybe make a new culture, a third culture (NB reference Schechner here as a parallel).	
16:01	Problems/issues: A – in his character: Maori-Fairy-King! But as he got accustomed and the set became clear he became able to embrace the role being a non-Maori but a New Zealander. Now he feels a little more connected because he has played, embodied the role. E – my family laughed at me when I revealed that I was to be a Maori queen, but I	

	<p>have always tried to say the language correctly. Now my family have started to embrace and accept the culture and my right, ability to portray that character. G – anybody can enhance the Maori culture inside you and anyone can act and learn from it. It is not a closed-off culture removed from us, like the Korean student who leads the Kapa Haka troupe at school. NB Referenced Jim Moriarty and all-comers are welcome. A – worried in the Te Ao Maori parts of the play and was worried who would not do it right and offend the audience. He changed when on production camp and there was an epiphany based on comfort. M – for her it was the majority of the cast being involved in conveying Te Ao Maori, and with so many committed it had a positive influence moving forward. A – in regards of offending Maori culture there were some who were good with it whilst there were also others that were not. For Maori culture to survive and expand then Maori need to fully embrace new ways of seeing and doing, maybe these are the older generation causing this inertia (pure bloods in Harry Potter). NB referenced Kanoa Lloyd and her confidence using Te Reo first when doing the weather on the news. M – had lines which were very Shakespearean and then she had a physicality that was very Maori but she had to reconcile this and this occurred through getting comfortable with the role and the physical execution</p>	
28:10	<p>Physical performance of Te Ao Maori/Maoritanga and our physical theatre use – no coincidence, and how did this help: J felt that it worked and the relationship between the two elements worked well. G felt that the two worlds of physical theatre and Te Ao Maori really connected. E felt that the physical actions created a relatable quality for</p>	

	<p>the audience and clearly delineated the character relationships in the play. D felt that there was an ability to physicalise the themes and the Maori world, as there was a way to colour the two worlds clearly too: Te Ao Pakeha contrasted in texture and colour with Te Ao Maori. The audience can enjoy the characters' journey through the breakdown of the costumes. Will felt that the experience of the production was so far removed from the terrible experiences of Shakespeare taught in class with profoundly disconnected/disinterested students. The Te Ao Maori and physical theatre elements surprised and excited the young audience who did attend.</p>	
33:20	<p>NB and not getting Shakespeare initially, and then seeing Robert Lepage's "...Dream" vestige of class and tradition and status and having come to NZ I reject that about myself and strip down to start again and re-layer the NZ(er) person with the clothes the garb of the new country; I hated myself so much when driven by class and status.</p>	
35min	<p>Epiphanies and why/how they happened: A and his final night and in the scene where Oberon gets angry at Puck and A decided to stare at Puck and in that moment A felt like Oberon and he dwelled in the moment in which he felt that we had been a success, he felt the power of the success of the production. NB what in the process helped you to be so embodied? A: the reaction of the audience, compared to the first few nights where they were "unsettled". The final night was the culmination of everything and (J) you felt "in control" of the audience. M: felt that once all the background detail accrued through the process had happened, she was totally in role, she belonged to the role and</p>	

	<p>she did not recognise her parents as such when she saw them hanging from the silks. There was a “support force” behind her, and the richness of the Maori culture enabled to embody the role so easily. G: at production camp and the first full run through and he realised that the play would work, and also the first night it felt real and you became the character, and the cast, the company was your family in reality. J: seeing mates in the crowd can be distracting, but here he was so focused on what you had to do, everything flowed. NB could it be said that the whakawhanaungatanga that was developed was a key to the support and family that allowed you to be invested and embodied in the way that occurred? Cast agreed. W: the set and design elements were also supporting elements. A didn’t want to chat to anyone but rather stay in the “Oberon zone” and was really sensitive to not break the illusion for himself; he also felt it hard to leave the stage.</p>	
46:40	<p>For A/Puck it was the context which was important. For A Matua T created the “Maori boost” but not so much that it was overworked, so the cast grew accustomed to it. Mary and NB kept persistent with the Maori cultural zone. M talks about that by the end everyone was their character, for e.g. E and her softness being seen in their version of Titania. NB and Judi Dench “you cannot be greater on stage than you are in life” used at this point. A and “putting yourself into the character”, and being a developing Year 13, and playing Oberon instilled in A the staunch, stoic strong nature within himself, and now he feels to be an authentic seventh former, and he learned this through the</p>	

	process and the final performance experiences. E believes that being empathetic and sensitive allowed her to enter Titania.	
55:36	A and choosing drama in Year 13 (for the first time), a subject to relax in (big laughs) important. No idea that the experience was to be as broad and enriching as it was, and he has enjoyed the profound “kinship” with others, and would be gutted to miss out and so would therefore be really nervous to audition (if he could) for “Sweeney Todd”.	
56:50	G was recounting a family friend who was so impressed with the production and could not believe that it was a school show and that the Te Ao Maori element could be so cleverly weaved in to the production.	
57:35	Culture, identity and society learning: for G it was a great way in to a subject very little understood by him, and excites him to engage more and learn more, but also makes it tangible (he has an entry point). Will there is so much to learn and although he recognises Te Ao Maori he was very European, of South African parents, but now his eyes are open. Te Ao Maori and also other cultures excite him: he wants to visit and experience everything “cause life was so boring before”, and now “what am I?” he stated. D felt that as a Pakeha he had some experience of learning waiata at intermediate, to sing waiata overseas and show the world and experience an overseas response to Te Ao Maori. He felt that furthered his experience by being involved in the production. A as an Indian New Zealander having dark skin helped; he discussed the	

	<p>connection to “Niu Sila” undertaken in class and that also focused on “cultural expectations” and tensions. “This production can be used to overcome racial boundaries” and “help abolish racism” in NZ or overseas. JJ, because his character surfed over the Te Ao Maori elements as Bottom, he felt he had missed out on the rich experience that the others have had. He is therefore keen to look for other projects that would allow him to enjoy what others had. A/Puck felt that he has, as a British (born, but NZ) youth, felt a new culture to be a part of and he was proud of that. He was pleased to be a part of it and that he embraced the process and experience. There was a chance at the start that he felt it might not work and so he was a little distance, but by embracing the process and production he felt that he was embraced.</p>	
1:06:50	<p>Looking at the photos of yourself what do you see? J “I really miss it” even though at the time he was so nervous to be in it; so wish I could repeat the experience as I so enjoyed it. E discussed the incredible world that was created for an audience. G liked how that this world was created positively for an audience to enjoy. E and positive role modelling compared to Maori on the TV and Police 10-7.</p>	
1:10:55	<p>A and thinking of Maori culture in performance and his Maori friend who felt a little distance due to the seriousness of how the culture was presented. This friend loved the performance though, but felt positioned differently to how the play was positioning itself. NB then led this to a discussion around the performance of the scene in Assembly, and student reactions.</p>	

1:19:00	<p>Final thoughts from students: the excitement and challenge of “Sweeney Todd”; G and the difference between the initial processes for “...Dream” (circle and playing) and “Sweeney Todd” (getting down to it and singing). J was missing something when he came to his Sunday’s and there was no rehearsal to go to. G feels that the English nature of “Sweeney Todd” versus being a family in Te Ao Maori will be a shock.</p>	
1:24:32	<p>NB discussing the emotional impact of the final haka (at the last night party) to say thanks to me compared to awards, and the presence of the mother-in-law who might have understood for the first time. A Te Ao Maori factor being used to say thanks for the Te Ao Maori process.</p>	

Appendix F: Mary Interview (transcription notes)

<i>Time</i>	<i>Discussion Point</i>	<i>Notes</i>
From start	Great working process as the process with Matua T (T) “gave permission” to work and play in Te Ao Maori and in the Tikanga. “Felt meaningful and rich” and Mary felt “more connected” with “it” (Te Ao Maori) than before.	Pt 1 of interview to 21:25
1mins	Compared to workshop richer and less tokenistic and more “interwoven” into the fabric school life; engrained in the life of the school and co-curricular work; worked across all levels.	
1:55	Mary enjoyed T’s presence and the way he worked so well, so generously with the students.	
4:00	Felt more entitled to speak Te Reo and emboldened to explore the language and culture because of the positive influence of the experience, and this has led to the use of Maori Myths and Legends in devising work.	
5:53	“...Dream” was in microcosm a theatrical version of what the All Blacks do: Haka and then a European game, quite binary in nature; the effort to bring the two worlds of Aotearoa NZ together and to explore that tension; understanding texts of the past and their relevance to the future (and present maybe).	

7:15	Image of Bottom in Titania's Maori bower was a nice image of the tension between the two worlds; the click of Oberon's fingers to stop Helena and Kaitiakitanga and his (Maori) realm.	
8:35mins	T's work with the fairies around the use of birds as the fairies physicality: this helped underline the heart and the meaning to Maori – it had resonance; anti-Western, Stanislavskian or Laban approach to understanding character; far more authentic way of finding physical character; it also helped Mary understand or have an insight into Kapa Haka and the meaning-making process.	
11	Mary did not feel that there were any explicit, clear-cut problems, although having more time to explore ideas and rehearsal methodologies would have been great.	
13:13	Epiphanies for Mary included that this was the best platform (drama/theatre) to explore these ideas and questions for students; Nick discussed another teacher's comments on the production and how she was doubtful about if it could work and then searched her Shakespeare as she could not believe that the production was not written in the same way.	
17:20	T generously gave license to Oberon (an Indian-New Zealander) to embody a Maori leader-king; to best exemplify the tensions between Te Ao Maori and Te Ao Pakeha	

	(and the success in demonstrating these) Mary would have shown the photographic image of Titania and Oberon in confrontation in their first meeting, on the diagonal on stage.	
18:25mins	Mary feels she has a long way to go in regards of learning about and then demonstrating and embodying her bicultural identity ; post seeing the production Mary enjoyed the discussion and debates in her own family about how Te Reo was spoken in the production, and what meaning can be found in Te Ao Maori; the production showed Mary that there are still many questions still to be asked, and that drama/theatre is a terrific context in which to do this.	
20:57	NB the Auditorium and the auditory aspect of theatre , and its relationship to the Roman Senate (and debate and discussion there), and how aligned the theatrical space is a place to debate/discuss the big ideas of the day .	
Start	The meaning of the production photos to Mary: they will be the ones the images that will stay around the longest (compared to other productions), they are a taonga ; the images sum up the work of all the parties ; the show what was “ merged and what emerged ”; the stunningly engaged faces of the Fairies , and how (NB) one student was positively invested/lost in the role of the Fairy, totally invested.	Pt 2 of interview to 9:56
3:03	NB: serendipity and synergy was such a joy and boon during these production processes.	

3:33	Differences between worlds of "...Dream" and "Sweeney Todd" and how the actors will not be able to get together in quite the same way at the start; the sense of a developed whanau , which was clear and evident in "...Dream"; will less be free and enable "on the feet discovery" as we had in "...Dream"; the non-semble will be closer to the ensemble for "...Dream".	
5:45	"Sightlines" and differences; did we all see the process and product differently? The audience did not see the journey/process that the cast went through ; would be nice/advantageous to have a "making of" documentary for the benefit of the audience.	
6:50	Developing a respect for our bicultural nature as a country is a reason why we teach , and the process made Mary a better teacher ; these are two worlds that are unfamiliar to one another: Shakespeare and Te Ao Maori; "if it hadn't been hard it wouldn't have been as great" (Mary ref. a student audience member).	
8:25 to end	Students need a platform to learn empathy and understanding for wider contexts and points of view , as well as resilience; the process went a long way to remind North Shore students that there are, in fact, ties here that bind, and that precede them; NB bicultural then multicultural second, as per T's remarks.	

Appendix G: Matua T Interview (transcription notes)

<i>Time</i>	<i>Discussion Point</i>	<i>Notes</i>
32secs	Great working collaboration key.	
1:17mins	Real satisfaction for T; enthused by the work; and by students who were clearly working with “rigour”.	
2:20	Maori blessing invented; OK to do in the guise of creative-aesthetic invention; if T felt uncomfortable by something experienced in rehearsal he would meditate and reflect then change, but he never felt uncomfortable, so this was a non-issue.	
3:15	“Spiritual consequences” for T if he did not respect the tikanga; T felt strong and confident though.	
4:00	How did things work well (Nick asked) for T; starting work in Tikanga (Karakia); “good nature” of Mary and myself; positive culture of everyone wanting to work; all comes from a good place.	
5:20	Changing cultural awareness in students shifting; definite shift in both men seen by T as post first rehearsal both Abram and Jordan sought ought T for a hongī, as did Grant Zent; boys trying to digest and get more from the collaboration; definite shifts from there on in; moments when V came to work with the female cast members, and the visible response by the female actors to her.	

7:45	Clear sense of who knows where the Maori-centric work started and ended, which came first in the process (real synergy); “Ani hi” and the lights coming on was a recurring “lovely motif” throughout the play, as described by T; the use of “tools” by the cast that had been played with in rehearsal and then in other parts of the play.	
9:45mins	Strategic Plan #2 and T’s position; allowing themselves (the students) to be opened up to the Maori world; personally, T is working to become more bicultural and learn Tikanga and Te Ao, but also walk in harmony with the other cultures of the world.	
13:15	What did our students learn or do differently through the process; through rehearsals and first performance the students have a sense of grounding and being open/available, and this reflected their maturity, which might have come from what we three (inc. Mary) had worked on; their mana (courage) was evident and was great.	
14:20	Mana, authority onstage, and prestige given after; deserved by the students; not necessarily those with the biggest parts, e.g. one student and “Po Marie”; she had taken the initiative to make the work (song) the best for her cast members.	
15:30	Other learnings; performances in Te Ao Maori aspects of “...Dream” were so strong and exciting for T; a positive reinforcement of T’s culture; based in these old piece of English writing – “colonization backwards”!	

17:20	T all for the positive representation of Te Ao Maori, reacting to Maori theatre of the 90s being all about “violence”: aspects of “Woman Far Walking” and the “angry young man”; “Once Were Warriors” epitomised the “tough man” mentality; addiction, baby deaths; art across the board, not just Maori theatre; that was valid then (the dominant Maori discourse of the time).	16.30 in so far
18:45mins	Fight and tension between Titania and Oberon; Fairies as the “silent partner of the aesthetic”; Oberon and Puck vs. Titania and Fairies was the “fight”; Titania and her Pukana, four weeks before she had not known what it was, and now it was a crucial part of her being.	
20:40	“Pakeaka” and the moment of tension after both haka have been performed/executed in this I felt was in the moment after the haka had been completed.	Great photo of her on Facebook and on L:
21:45	The Fairies and “just go to your bird” as a default mechanism when the characters go slightly out of focus.	
23:25	The “image base” of Shakespeare’s language and thus is related to Te Ao Maori and Whai Korero: T says “a reflection of myself and we say ‘mokopuna’”, and thus it lends itself beautifully to Te Ao Maori, that’s why the connection is evident.	
25:20	Te Ao Maori and the nature focus of the culture and relationships to Shakespeare.	

27:20	Concerns over “tokenism” and concerns from T; Nick relayed the concerns made post the assembly sharing, and concerns from the Maori students: this shows that “more education” is needed, stated T.	
30:50	If Hato Petera put on such a show it would be more “kapa haka theatre”, rather than what WBHS did; if at Hato Petera had done it they would have got in you (Nick), as you understand the tikanga of Shakespeare.	
32:30mins	Student reactions to St Kentigern production of “...Dream” and their new knowledge about meaning, allusions and their evident demonstration of their new knowledge due to the processes of the production.	
35mins	Students will most likely miss “...Dream”, and the experience, because they owned that world; where will they get a chance to demonstrate that knowledge again? Is that a flaw in the programme (Nick) as there is no next logical step and what would that next step look like?	
36:00	Blockages and insights were not apparent, as T has faith in his practices; also we passed the baton between us, giving time for solutions time to present themselves;	
37:45	A friend from overseas what would you say, well to my flatmates I describe the process and the amazement that the students are “off the book”, which is impressive and intimidating; a good “kick up the backside (for me, T) to see the actors doing the	

	<p>mahi and getting the rewards”. “After my first time at rehearsals I realised that I needed to work harder and make it less improvised and more Shakespeare centric”.</p>	
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Appendix H: Interviews with students which became *YouthQuake*

Wednesday, October 20, 2017

Issue: Student Position and Racism

Student I – feels “sheltered” in her NZ life

Student Ka – “memes” and media perpetuating a bit of a myth; tension between the culture of Kiwi born [Asian NZers](#)¹³⁹ compared to the mistaken experience of those new to NZ such as international students

Student P – can we make [art that promotes values and attitudes](#)¹⁴⁰ that might impact the world; a worthy discourse?

Student C – students should model positive roles in relation to [racist attitudes](#)¹⁴¹ and principles

Student I & S – we need to learn more about how to be a [better](#) or [good person](#)

Student K – “[good person](#)” [projects](#) in Hauora is a way to see you being a better human

Student M & C – the fear of standing up for the right thing to do; the challenge and danger of not handling the situation well; the consequence can be worse than the initial problem

Student P – “[silence is a form of violence](#)” in relation to not speaking up and out; being quiet can be being a bully

Student J – feeling alone because he was judged and then bullied; everyone has the fear of being alone

Student M – “[it won’t be the evil people who will destroy the world, it will be the people who do nothing](#)”

Issue: Agency

Student K – [NZ](#)¹⁴² is generous in it allows us to travel, gives us opportunities to learn, in the hope that we bring these back to NZ; privilege is also clear and those that have the privilege have a head start in life

Student P – [WGHS](#) represents the whole of [NZ in microcosm](#), and we have a country who cares and is positive

Student M – [NZ is an amazing, but it is a place of contradictions](#): we have some of the highest suicide rates in the OECD; being a young and innocent country is often used as an excuse for ignorance

¹³⁹ [Issue 1 – “Race”](#)

¹⁴⁰ [Issue 2 – “Art for Change”](#)

¹⁴¹ [Issue 3 – “Time of Trump”](#)

¹⁴² [Issue 4 – “NZ Life”](#)

Student Ka – her perception of the world is based on how she has been placed in a position in that world: genes, family expectation; before she branched out she was unsure if she wanted or needed to change; she could have followed the path laid out by her family

Student D – is the only member of his family in NZ, whilst the rest are in Korea; there is a tension between the academic family members in Korea compared to the freedom of Danny to be a different kind of student that Danny gets to be in NZ

Student Dy – putting your parents on a pedestal and realising slowly that they are not perfect, and that you are different to them: you are yourself, not them, in the end

Student C – was interested in the contradiction around when is adulthood, as she helped her Dad with data helping him to vote, and she is 16; should 16 year olds be allowed to vote (probably yes)

Student K – your relationship to your parents and how that informs “what you take from them”

Issue: The Time of Trump

Student M – he’s the devil on your shoulder (shouting down the good angels); society must be the good angel that we as a world society have to become

Student J – the need for Trump to always disagree, especially around transgender troops: we are an evolving society – get with the programme

Student P – sexual threat and assault in society; the licence for men to behave in a disgusting way; Trump is a licence for the worst in society to come forward

Student S – women in society have come together and are working positively towards addressing historical wrongs; men who can behave in the way that they are

NB Students P and M have especially been really on form and might be good to meet with Mary/Nick and maybe a few others?

Friday, October 2

Student M – oppression is a common experience for women; in the range of sexual harassment (not rape culture); ignorance in comments and attitudes; because it is so prevalent it has become “normalised” which is not appropriate; the #me too campaign around women and sexual assault, which is shocking and eye-opening; women still feel the blame and shame and some responsibility for their situation, when it is clearly not; the horror of the memes that make a joke as a meme about “rape culture” and how diminishing it is; discussed the idea of the “keyboard warrior” where you are more comfortable and emboldened across the social media platform

Student A – #me too campaign does not mean that you have to explain yourself, that could remain private

Idea: the play “Lysistrata” as a play with counterpoints? Or “Blackbird” by David Harrower?

Student C – and the shock of **not being taught how to be reject the inappropriate overtures** of others

Student D – **hates the streaming system** and that you think of yourself is being either smart or dumb, and it **reinforces** bully and **social stigma** in the playground; the feeling of being labelled; when the results then become available you are then seeing yourself through this lens and reducing yourself to this issue

Student E – the **tension between being an individual**¹⁴³, as school encourages us, and also that schools say **no to cultural artefacts** such as rings and tattoos and necklaces

Student M – **labels such as ADHD are an issue**; there is also a bias and attitude towards young women such as how they are viewed when on period and such

Student Mi – she also suffers the **stigma of a lack of intelligence** as she is dyslexic

To what extent do you feel that labels might limit you/make or create change?

one student – who played the Judge from *Sweeney Todd* – always **called fat as a child**, and always told that he was never going to do much, especially anything athletic. Labels put you into a group automatically that restricts you until you become an adult, barring you from taking opportunities as you may feel that you do not fit in it because of your label

Student Mi – **Labels have consequences** (fat = starving themselves), creates insecurities, feels like you have to be restricted to your own labels (Can't be pretty AND smart, etc.)

Labels meant different things in different places (In Asia, nerdy = good, in NZ nerdy = bad, try hard, this is when people start to believe they have to prove themselves)

Student W – some people believe that these labels cannot and should not mix (Māori can't be with white, etc.)

Kapa haka, those who aren't Māori who want to join don't want to as they're afraid of not knowing the culture and that they wouldn't fit

You begin to believe in your own fears about stepping out of your label, stops you from getting where you want to be, progresses to self-hatred; unfair to be expected to fit into the label; affects people more when it starts out at a young age

Student A – **Ability to label yourself instead of being labelled**, makes it relatable to other people who are similar

Student L – Friends help with feeling confident about labels, grew up thinking being a homosexual was bad and not normal and felt bad for feeling that way, looked at every move he made to make sure he fit in (voice, body language, etc.), eventually found friends and media that accepted him and how he felt

¹⁴³ Issue 5 – “Labels”

Media can define what we feel is weird and normal (media diet), seeing something on media that we do reassures ourselves that we are being normal (“Oh, I do that”).

We’re also **careful to try not to offend or freak out people with other labels** with what we think that label approves and disapproves of (Christian = can’t be friends with gays, no swearing)

Common idea/**belief that labels come with rules** that dictate how you must and should live your life and that you have to conform to those rules

Labels make people believe that they have to look like this or that, and places like gyms **help push that stereotype** (most guys want to look buff, always at the lifts, girls usually in cardio, and posters of masculine males carrying big weights with photo shopped females carrying light weights)

Labels (males) – men are made to believe that they have to be tough and that they can’t be soft, can result in them bottling their feelings, can lead to suicidal thoughts

Student Mi – the use of female derogatory comments to describe sensitive men is so horrible to both men and women

Student Ma – the medium of cartoons can act as a modelling of behaviour and ethical, moral conduct in the world; sometimes we fail to address differences when actually it’s ok and helps to get to know people better; it’s important to feel special about ourselves, to be confident in that skin

Student C – you **cannot make a difference unless you are different**

Student Mi – concerned that she does not always fall in with a movement because it does not affect her as it might

Skin colour as a representative of your race; the only thing that you see of that person, and judgements are made on that basis alone, which is troubling

Issue: What stories speak to you?

Student A – “Whale rider”

Student Mi – Shrek, for the diversity (gender confused wolf); “Zootopia”

Student L – “In a Heartbeat” (short film)

Student Me – “Moana”; “Harry Potter”; “Percy Jackson”

Student M – “Grim” (TV; stereotypes explored); “What we do in the Shadows” (film)

Appendix I: Scene 17 – Portrait of an Artist as a Young Person (English)

A young man walks to the middle of the stage, sits, and pulls out a book and pencil from the satchel s/he carries. S/he silently starts to draw.

A large screen sits at one (or both) ends of the stage. It is white, but when pencil comes in contact with page, a Chinese character appears on the screen.

Slowly, as the young woman/man draws, the symbol transforms into something else – a drawing/sketch: something quite different from what it was before (a portrait/picture etc).

The young woman/man looks up and stands.

Today, I am an artist.

In the space of my notebook, I can draw what I am.

Outside of this space, I am drawn differently. In school, I speak Mandarin with my friends, and I am told to go back to Asia. Apparently, it doesn't really matter which part; because while I am still labelled as different, I have somehow also become all the same.

I am a still life to some: fixed and clear, created from brushstrokes which are assured and certain. I have known where my path is to lead from when I was very little.

But tomorrow, I will tell my family I wish to study Fine Arts. I will cease to be a still life and become an impressionist. A piece of pointillism. A cubist, made up of shapes that sit out of focus with conventional patterns. By taking up my pen I will label myself as different and select a path separate from the one laid out by my parents.

How would you draw me?

The scene cross fades back to the narrator, Archimedes, in his bath.

Appendix J

FLOTUS' staff debate what jacket should Melania wear?

The image of Melania in her infamous Zara jacket is projected on to the screen, along with the title "Wardrobe Choices".

White House Staff 1: OK, the First Lady is planning an impromptu visit to the detention centres on the Mexican border, and –

2: and, the big question is "who" should she wear?

3: Yes, we wanna give out the right message –

4: American made, obviously –

5: Yes, musn't be made in a Mexican sweatshop!

General agreement from the assembled staff.

1: Donna Karan?

2: Tommy Hilfiger?

3: Vivien Westwood?

1: No – she's British!

All staff react negatively.

6: It's gotta make a statement –

5: Isn't better if we avoid making a statement?

1: But we can deflect attention away from the big issues by making the statement – the new-big-shiny-object-over-here kinda distraction...

All agree enthusiastically.

3: Maybe it should have sequins – they're shiny!

4: That's gay!

5: The base won't like that...

They all agree.

6: What if it had some text on it?

2: Yes – has anyone designed a "Make America Great Again" jacket?

General excitement.

4: Err, guys, the First Lady has asked if we can create some distance between her position and the President's...

1: Why? What's she wanting to say?

4: Well, the suggestion that she is a racist, family-destroying ass like her husband?

6: Ooh, harsh!

5: But fair...

1: But what is she wanting to say!?

4: Well, just to create some distance between their points of view. She does not wanna be tarred with the same brush.

3: *Having an epiphany.* "I really don't care. Do you?"

1: Now that is no way to speak about an important issue –

3: No, you misunderstand – last season at Zara they had a jacket that read "I really don't care. Do you?"

4: You don't think that's too harsh?

2: Not harsher than removing kids from the parents!?

1: Hey, whose side are you on!

2: Sorry...

6: We are on the First Lady's side; we serve her and her agenda...

2: And wearing this jacket will tell her supporters that her focus is not on for what the President is doing – separating parents from their kids at the border – but more about what she can do by visiting and offering help. Maybe it's a challenge to the public – she cares about these children; do they?

1: Great. Let's do it... OK, so we have the jacket, now what about the shoes?

2: Jimmy Choo's?

3: Louis Vuitton?

4: Gucci?

6 Doc Martin's?

1: She's the First Lady, not a regimental marching band.

Agreement. Fade to black.